

Virtue triumphant, and Pride
abased ;

In the Humorous

HISTORY
OF
DICKY GOTHAM,
AND
DOLL CLOD;

Digested from antient Tractates, and the Records of those memorable Families, now extant at *Addle Hall*, in *Nottinghamshire*.

By R. P. *Biographer*.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

Printed for M. COOPER, at the *Globe*, in
Pater-noster Row. MDCCLIII.

Value (unimpaired) and Title
added;

In the Hammer

HISTORY

OF

DICKENS COTTON

AND

DODD



Printed in the
Cottons of the
extent of 1000000 in Nottinghamshire.

By R. P. Rogers.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

Printed for M. Cooper, at the Old
Print-Shop in New Market.



THE CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.

SQUIRE Richard's and Dolly's reception at Addleball. Her ladyship's behaviour. Noble offer of Mr. Gotham. Dolly's melancholy, and the cause. Different effects of her love to her parents.
Page 1

CHAP. II.

Spark and his wife settle at the farm. Dolly visits her mother. Leave Addleball for London. Their journey. 18

CHAP. III.

Consists of transactions on their arrival at London. 35

CHAP. IV.

Squire Richard and Dolly return to Nottinghamshire. Account of Scriven and wife. Squire Richard's reception at Addleball.

Page 51

CHAP. V.

Adventures at Nottingham races.

61

CHAP. VI.

Adventure at Loughborough races.

74

CHAP. VII.

Death of Sir Rustick. Lady Dowager Gotham imprisoned. Mr. Ringwood undone. Mrs. Ringwood seeks relief from Scriven.

92

CHAP. VIII.

Her reception. Her reformation began. Is reconciled. Intends a visit to Sir Richard. Writes her submission to him.

108

CHAP.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. IX.

Sir Richard's reconciliation with Mrs. Ringwood. Letter from lady dowager. Mrs. Ringwood's answer. Lady Gotham's generous offer. A conference thereon. 124

CHAP. X.

Lady Dowager's release from the Fleet. 138

CHAP. XI.

Continuation of their affairs in town. Journey to Addleball. Meeting of the old lady and Scriven. Engage a company of strollers. 151

CHAP. XII.

Two lovers hanged in one string. Relieved by lady Gotham, and rewarded by her humanity. 164

CHAP.

C H A P. XIII.

Sir Richard returned to parliament. Mr. Ringwood's death. Journey to parliament. Find an infant on the road. Mrs. Ringwood on point of marriage. Meets her husband. 183

C H A P. XIV.

Discovery of Mrs. Ringwood to her husband. Debates thereon. Has another wife. He quits claim to her. 203

C H A P. XV.

Parker marries Mrs. Ringwood. Her first marriage discovered to him. He challenges Sir Richard. Lady Gotham meets, and vanquishes Parker. 214

C H A P. XVI.

Mrs. Ringwood refused admission to Parker's house. Death of the dowager. Sir Richard and Parker meet. Ringwood and wife reconciled. Settle together. 228

C H A P.

CONTENTS.

vii

CHAP. XVII.

Debate on the duel, between Sir Richard and Parker. Discovered who fought him. Account of Dolly's family and their successors. Marriage of her three eldest daughters. Courtship of Miss Claudia by a nobleman.
281

CHAP. XVIII.

Interview of the earl with her ladyship and miss. Are married. Character of a married life. Sir Richard's death.
256

CHAP. XIX.

Lady Gotham pestered with suitors. A barrister's attack. A parson's. She is almost entrapt, but escapes.
267

CHAP. XX.

Account of the foundling. Courtship of Miss Emma.
282

CHAP. XXI.

Dolly erects an hospital. Endows it. Dies guardian of it.
295

THE

CONTENTS

CHAP. XVII.

Deaths on the ship, between Sir Richard and
Parker. Discovered and found him.
Count of the ship and other things.
Matters of the ship and other things.
Compass of the ship by a machine.
281

CHAP. XVIII.

Intention of the ship and her loading and
matters. The machine. Character of a man.
and the ship. Richard's death.
282

CHAP. XIX.

Lord's Garden and other things. A man.
The ship's machine. A passage. See in chapter.
283

CHAP. XX.

Account of the founding. Compass of the
Furnace.
284

CHAP. XXI.

Dolls' cross on the ship. Parker's death.
Foundation of the ship.
285

THE

THE HISTORY

OF

Squire Richard Gotham and Doll Clod.

VOL. II.

CHAP. I.

Squire Richard's and Dolly's reception at Addlehall. Her ladyship's behaviour. Noble offer of Mr. Gotham. Dolly's melancholy, and the cause. Different effects of her love to her parents.

IN the former volume, we left our travellers in Sir Rustick's park; who by this time were quitting their vehicle, and entering Addlehall.

Sir Rustick, on information of what company were arrived, made no scruple of admitting them into the parlour to him, where happened to be Boozey Ringwood and his lady, (who were come upon a visit since

VOL. II.

B

the

the death of his father) Scriven and his wife, (who had for some time been with the knight) and her ladyship. The rest all sat it, but her ladyship not stomaching her new relation desired leave to retire; alledging the little relish she should have for her part, at being called mother, by such a coarse creature as Doll.

The uncle Gotham first entered the room as master of the ceremonies, to introduce the offending parties; and as their prolocutor, to reconcile differences, and pave a way to the parents favour and forgiveness; but the knight spying his son over his brother's shoulder, (in raptures at the sight of this resuscitated maintainer of his family;) Dick, said he, come forward, my dear child; let me embrace thee.

The squire, waiting no farther invitation, sprang towards him, with his lady in his hand, and both prostrating themselves before him, he heartily blessed them, the tears trickling down his cheeks for joy, while he alternately hugged them in his arms.

This unexpected reception, proved no small pleasure to the good Mr. Gotham, though it had robbed him of the display of his talent in a most pathetic oration, which he had been digesting under proper heads, for good part of his journey; but Dolly herself

Squire Gotham and Doll Clodd. 3

self was so joyous at it, that she could have dwelt in the knight's arms, she so admired his condescension to her.

When all due ceremony had passed between the knight and them; while the two brothers were congratulating each other, the squire and his lady paid their compliments to their brothers and sisters; but met not equal returns from both: Mrs. Scriven indeed, and her spouse, welcomed him and his lady, to Addlehall, saluted, and joyed them of their marriage; but Mrs. Ringwood, having dropt a catching curtesy, with a mock bow, and contemptuous sneer, wiped off Dolly's kisses with her handkerchief; and there was such fantastic airs between Ringwood and her, tossing of the head, and winking with the eye at poor Dolly; that she, who was far from a fool, could not but be uneasy at.

The squire applied himself, on several different affairs, to his brother Ringwood; which the other replied to, only with a perhaps so.—Very likely.—'Tis possible, or some such insignificant answer, accompanied with a shrug and a wink to his lady; while Scriven and his wife, not yet so elate with fortune's smiles, in humblerwise demeaned themselves, not only by more pertinent answers, but by civilly, and diffidently engaging

in discourse, both with the young squire and his lady, being cautious of forming any demand, which might draw her out of her depth for a reply.

Dolly, who was no mean observer of all that passed, treasured up in her mind her remarks on the two sisters different behaviour to her; not doubting, but time and occasion might offer, for repaying each in kind, though at present it might be most reasonable to appear blind to them: however, as Mrs. Ringwood acted with views so remote from her sister Scriven, Dolly put her to the trouble of but few words, applying herself as wholly to Mrs. Scriven, as if the other had not been in the company.

The two brothers were chatting over old stories, and Mr. Gotham was giving the knight an account of some of his Leicestershire neighbours, and particularly of a daughter of one of their old cronies, whom he was extolling, as a person of vast endowments, and one of the best bred ladies of the age: when Mrs. Ringwood, thinking to take a fling at Dolly, joined in with them, by expressing herself an utter enemy to your brutal creatures, without manners and polite behaviour; for that in her opinion, no woman was fit to appear at all in company, without them. I presume you mean

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 5

mean such company sister, said Dolly, as have neither candor, or complaisance enough to overlook a well intended error ; (she being ready to burst at the reflection) for otherwise, I have been so foolish to think, that good behaviour was attainable from being conversant with good company ; but if all that have it not already, are, by your rule to be excluded the society of them who have, I am afraid good breeding must die with the present possessors ; and then, what an age will the next be ?

Mrs. Ringwood, taking notice that every eye in the room was upon her, wished with all her heart that she had had her words in again ; but she was in the hands of a generous adversary, who scorned to follow her blow, after a fall.

It is remarkable amongst the true old British breed, that no two are more firm friends, than they who have stoutly banged each other ; for then the conquered, for his own sake, acts upon caution ; and the conqueror, in generosity, uses him with candour ; and thus in part it fared with our two female disputants ; for Mrs. Ringwood had enough of Dolly's faculty for argument, to satisfy her that meddling with edged tools was but the way to cut her fingers ; and Dolly fathoming the depth of her

policy, was too noble to push her to a blush.

Squire Richard had, at his first coming, inquired into his mama's health, whom he every moment expected to have seen; but she not yet appearing, he was again inquisitive after it, and why he could not have the pleasure of her company? Ay, said Mr. Gotham, I am surpris'd we have not had my sister amongst us yet.

Brother, said Sir Rustick, you have never yet been so happy as to have proved from experience, (as I have done) that women are not to be beat out of their own ways of thinking. You must know, Sir, my dame can't be perswaded, that Dolly's rank in life is lofty enough for a mate to my son; and for that reason, she hath now shut herself into her closet, that by force of her own abilities, she may by herself, demonstrate to herself, that herself is in the right of it; for I'll lay my life that is the matter in debate now, if the truth was known.

I have said all that I can to her already; have roughed her, have smoothed her, have rattled her, have soothed her; but it is just like pouring more liquor upon a full vessel, whatever you add runs over, for want of room to contain it. She's so flushed with her own Conceptions, that she can admit none of my doctrine. I wish
you

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 7

you would argue the case with her ; for any man can do more with a wife than her own husband ; then prithee brother, try to reduce her to temper.

Mr. Gotham, who was ever ready for any friendly office, accepted the post, and sought her in her chamber ; where having plyed her with his most masterly documents, he at length prevailed with her to descend into the parlour with him.

It was not to be expected, that her ladyship should have behaved with any excess of affection to the young couple ; but they no sooner beheld her, than they were upon their knees before her. She blest them not, or at least it was mentally only, for no one heard her ; but raising her son by the hand, she saluted him, Dolly still keeping her station, till the squire assisted her to rise, and presented her for the like favour, which her ladyship, on the advice of her brother, seemed to grant ; but never touched her face, withdrawing her head in a supercilious manner, and with a small elevation of her nose, (proclaiming the offensive smell that her nostrils were affected with) she took her place, at the remotest distance from Dolly that the room would admit of.

Well, my dear, said Sir Rustick, what think you of your daughter Gotham ? Dick

has made a fine girl of her, has not he? by my troth I don't know a brighter original, of the true red and white in the country; what say you?

I suppose, you imagine men to be the best judges of beauty, Sir Rustick, said her ladyship; therefore having your opinion, I desire to be excused from giving mine. Ounze Doll, said the knight, thou'rt an ass; where could Dick have picked up a tighter lass? Come Dolly, said he, kiss me again, child, and when thy mother's senses return, she'll love thee as I do.

Mother! Sir Rustick, mother! said my lady: an unhappy one, I am sure, to have a child forced upon me thus, by a knot of designing people. Here the squire interposed. Madam, said he, let me clear my spouse, and all her family from the least imputation of that sort. No, madam, the motion arose from me, nor (since my father and uncle are pleased to look affectionately upon her) am I any ways ashamed of, but rather glory in my choice; nor care I now, if all the world dislikes it. I hope to be happy with her; and if not, madam, it will be none of your fault; which it must have been, that I was otherwise, had I married elsewhere upon your recommendation.

Her

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 19

Her ladyship, then flouncing out of the room, declared, that she would be company for no such low born creatures; commanding Dolly never more to mention her by the name of mother.

Dick, said Sir Rustick, I am sorry thy mother should give herself these airs before my brother; but I'll give thee a thousand a year to begin with: for I perceive that one house will never hold you and her ladyship.

The young ones were overcome with the knight's benevolence, and rendered him infinite acknowledgments for his favour; when his brother told Sir Rustick, that his nephew had received what he was indebted to him, and that all together, he would have a very pretty competency. Now brother, added he, as it will be a most ungrateful thing to me to leave your house, before a thorough reconciliation is had between my sister, and her son and daughter; for I am assured it is the want of a fortune in my niece, suitable to her son, that gives her such an abhorrence to the match; I say, that having nicely remarked my niece's conduct ever since she has been with me, and observing therein no tendency to the least evil disposition, I have conceived such hopes from her, that myself will give her a fortune,

equivalent to whatever her ladyship may think my nephew might have expected with another ; in case she will but acknowledge her for her daughter, and generously pass by my nephew's marriage, against her inclination.

Sir Rustick was so astonished at his brother's magnificent offer, that he was at a loss how sufficiently to express the favour ; but ordered her ladyship to be immediately called, when the squire intreated, that he might be the messenger ; he was so, and prevailed so powerfully, while he had her alone, that at length she re-entered with him ; when her brother again repeating what he had engaged to do, and the condition of it, she vouchsafed to lower her topsails to the lovely Dolly, and not only kissed, but forgave her, and her son too, as she said, sincerely ; but malice once rooted in the heart, scarce quits its hold but with life itself.

Mr. Gotham then demanding, what she imagined his nephew might have had with another wife ? She replied, that Mr. Ringwood, with his daughter, would have given him six thousand pounds ; but that though his good nature might prompt him to a benefit, it was not to be expected he should give a stranger, as Dolly was to him, any
thing

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 11

thing like that sum. Sister, said Mr. Gotham, you mistake greatly; the virtuous, and deserving, are strangers to no prudent man. I am not only a friend, but a relation, nay a father to those qualities, wheresoever found. You have one son, and from this moment, I esteem myself as blest with one daughter; for I hereby adopt my niece for such. I will give her ten thousand pounds in hand, and at my death, my whole estate to her husband; for I never yet met with that woman, whose qualities I should have preferred, even for an own child.

This so extraordinary, and unexpected profession of their uncle, had made such an impression on the faculties of Dolly, that she was scarce able to support herself under the pressure; when bursting into tears at her uncle's feet, she lamented her own unworthiness, for so affectionate a declaration; but added, that next to the regard she was in duty bound to pay her husband, her concern should ever be to render him all duty, and obedience, though she could never be in expectation of meriting a tithe of his present benevolence.

They were now sitting down to supper, when any one would have imagined, that after such a flow of success as had rolled in

upon her, Dolly should have appeared the most gladsome creature upon earth ; but, on the contrary, she could no ways disguise a weight with which her soul still laboured, and which at every interval of discourse, would cast a gleam of sadness over her whole woman.

Though this was not unperceived by the whole company, yet it was first hinted at to her by her uncle, who having so much delighted himself at her gratification, could submit to no shew of inquietude in her mind ; and therefore demanded what it should be, which still lurking in her breast, might but contingently interpose between his dear daughter, and her absolute felicity ; for that something still was behind ; all was not right, he was positive.

Dolly's modest reserve would not permit her directly to avow there was ; nor without falsifying her veracity, could she peremptorily deny it : but in order to have avoided the plain affirmative, replied, by another question, of what could possibly be wanting to her, so amply invested with her husband's love, his own esteem, and the confessed regard of her father-in-law and his family ?

This would not still do ; for not only Mr. Gotham himself, but all the table
(since

(since his mention of it) bore testimony that she still wore a depressed brow, which her every artifice to conceal, but the more apparently exhibited. Now her uncle declaring, that having studied every thing hitherto in consummation of his daughter's felicity, the satisfaction he had thereby proposed to himself would be far from compleat, in case his efforts had not proved successful; Dolly, ever born by his importunity, after wiping off the pearly bubbles then just issuing from her eyes, began to explain herself, as follows :

Sir, said she, the princely donation your bounty hath made me, is most undoubtedly intended for the benefit of my husband, and such family as heaven may hereafter bless us with; nor ought any part of it to be diverted from the channel your goodness hath assigned for it's conveyance. Far be it from me to conceive, that my dear husband would not indulge me in the disposition of such a part of it as I should require; no, I have the least reason of any woman breathing to form a distrust of that; but yet, methinks, I could rather, that any liberality of mine, might neither affect his fortune, or pervert the design of your munificence.

As

As for myself, the bounteous hand of providence seems to have established my situation above the apprehension of future distress ; but that part of me, is far from being chiefest in my esteem. I have parents, Sir, I have brethren, and sisters, for whom my soul is equally anxious, as participants of my natural being ; and while they are grovelling in the dust, without the least prospect, or probability of extrication ; how can my grandeur sit otherwise than heavily, and unbecoming upon me ?

Could it have been in your imagination, dear Sir, to have bestowed a small part of your bounty upon me, for my own particular purposes ; I am thinking, I say, should that have proved the case, and the free disposition of it had been permitted me, with what comfort to myself, I could have contracted my own disbursements, (for in nature I want but little) in aid of their necessities ; and thereby have given them a chance for advancement in life, as well as myself : for though providence hath dispensed its benefits so profusely to me, in an elevation as unexpected, as unmerited ; and that too, from the basest condition of human beings ; yet, that is but as an excess in fortune's productions, which every one is not to expect.

While

While Dolly had been thus employed, the two brothers had been watching each other's eyes, to read, if possible, their internal sentiments ; nor had her ladyship been less observant of them both ; though not with that delight they seemed mutually to minister to each other : for the fury grew red hot within her, at the audaciousness (as she called it) of the impertinent wench ; who could not content herself with the prospect of good bread, without bespeaking the whole loaf for her needy family ; but Dolly's sentiments had wrought other effects upon the two brothers, and Sir Rustick was so transported with them, that calling her to him, and clasping her in his arms, where is the child of mine, said he, among you all, that having feathered his own nest, would have spared a stub to me, his parent ?

This motion of thine, child, said he, was hatched in heaven ; nor shall it fail of a support on earth. I will assign five hundred pounds to your disposal, behave therewith as your own inclination shall dictate ; I need not confine it to this or that particular use, your own nature is so prompt to apply it properly ; nor will I concern myself about the manner, for that noble spirit which hath urged

urged you to the will, cannot desert you in the application.

Mr. Gotham said, it was no mean check to his vanity, that his brother had taken the lead, in expressing his opinion of his daughter's perfections; for had it been his good fortune to have gained the start, he had made the very same offer: but not choosing to reap a benefit from his own backwardness, what he had intended, he would advance, not in the least suspecting, but the same zeal which at first promoted his niece's concern for the want of it, would direct her hand in its most beneficial distribution, which he should wholly remit to her.

Dolly's heart abounding with indescribable tenderness, could only express its satisfaction, in tears of joy and gratitude; but her ladyship, who harboured not that soft disposition, was incapable of those pleasing sensations which the two brothers enjoyed; for while each of them were wrapt in silent reverie, indulging over the joy of their benevolent intentions, her ladyship roughly broke out, with so, gentlemen, I perceive your donations are not concluded yet; when this crocodile has wept you out of all you have, I presume you are to become pensioners to the Clods,
and

Squire Gotham and Dolly Clod. 17

and I shall be turned out of doors. You may depend upon it, that a creature of her generous disposition, will use you both exceeding handsomly, when you fall upon her hands; but for my part, so long as a garret remains in the county, and bread and water will sustain nature, I shall never submit myself to a support from her.

Pray proceed, and offer away to your last mite, at the shrine of this adorable goddess; but you shall not have me longer present to bear testimony of your stupidity. Men indeed! the lords of the creation! to be whimpered out of your substance by a base whining hussy! when did either of you ever offer me five hundred pounds, to dispose as I pleased? out upon you!

Having made this speech, her ladyship was moving off with all speed, when Dolly on her knees interposed, between her and the door, intreating her to be pacified; for that if what had passed gave her the least offence, she would wholly relinquish the favour intended her; not doubting, but by some means, providence would enable her to assist her poor parents; but her ladyship was already too much nettled to compose herself so suddenly, and spurning her away with her arm, by casting her along on the floor, made way for herself to pass; nor did

did she appear any more in the company, that night.

The sweetness of Dolly's behaviour gained more and more upon the audience, for she shone the brighter for every fall; nay, even Ringwood and his wife, though they contemned, yet admired her, and were somewhat moved in her favour; but it lasted not long with them, though it riveted itself, by a close adhesion to all the rest.

C H A P. II.

Spark and his wife settle at the farm. Dolly visits her mother. Leave Addleball for London. Their journey.

IT is very certain, that there is not more difference between man and man, than there is between the same individual under affluent circumstances, and himself in mean ones; and that, not only discernible to himself, but to all with whom he converses: the very aspect of a star in its ascension, bespeaks our regard; whereas in its declination we behold it with prejudice indifference; nay, the same man in abundance, hath somewhat in him imperative of our esteem and admiration, which in an abased

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 19

abased state, he not only loses in himself, but cannot exhibit to others.

I would draw the above observation into use, by an application to Doll Clod, as such, and herself, as Mrs. Dorothea Gotham. This girl, who upon the most solemn occasion that could have occurred in her pristine state, had been despised, and laughed at only, as a novice; could now, neither act, or do what was illaudable; nor was she in the least insensible of the opinion others had of her. It is therefore plain, that the latent seeds of a just deportment are innate, though only roused to action by contingencies; as the quality of fire is in the flint and steel, though it acts not but from collision.

Having tucked up the squire and his lady in bed, to which they were by this time retired, we must return to the rest of his care, Spark and his Doxie.

Mrs. Mary being a stranger, and just married, the house-keeper seeing her so grimly dressed, and having heard from the report of Spark, that she was mistress of Senex's farm, would by no means hoist her into the garrets with the common servants; but appointed her one of the second best beds in the house, and every thing was set her in as ample form by the house maid, as if she had
been

been a parlor visitor; which alteration, from her former circumstances, endeared her husband the more to her; and indeed, was it not for that superior respect which married women receive, and which they justly attribute to that state, a due subordination would scarce be preserved in matrimony.

This treatment, not only raised Polly's chin somewhat higher than before, but she beheld Spark too (observing that others did so) in a more transcendent light than that of a menial servant, (for it mostly happens, that the value which the world places upon us, is the least we esteem ourselves by) and already began, to hint at their retiring to the farm.

Spark, who had a sincere value for his master, scarce knew how to relish a departure from his service, and would rather have engaged his wife to his sister, where he said, she would be better provided for, than their farm would maintain her, till a growing family should necessitate them to quit service; and this he urged so strenuously, till at length, Molly came into the scheme, and purposed to ask her sister's advice in the affair.

The next morning, Molly, who at Mr. Gotham's, and ever since, had executed the
post

post of dresser to Dolly, made bold; she said, to propound to her the discourse; that the night before had passed between her and her husband; and then opened the whole, with a proffer of her best service, as it would be a great saving to them, not only of what they already possessed, but by the accumulation of their rents for some time, it would enable them to enter with a better stock upon their farm, than they were able to do at present.

Dolly, having attended to her proposal, and reasons, replied; sister, I could from my heart wish, both you and my brother as well provided for as myself; but as that can never be expected, let it be my care, to set you down as easily as at present circumstances will admit. I would by no means have you and my brother remain in my family; for that it is too often seen to breed differences, from a too great assumption of liberties on the one side, or a too rigorous restraint on the other; in either of which cases, no jars arise to the height of those between relations.

I hope soon to have it in my power to be helpful to you, nor shall I, when that time arrives, be regardless of you: but your remove to the farm will be the more acceptable to me, the more speed you proceed with;

with ; not that I would have you imagine, I covet to part with you ; but as I am assured it will contribute to your real good ; nor shall your frugal industry be too straitly confined, while I see my assistance needful.

No sooner was Dolly drest, than Polly flew to Spark, with the news of his sister's advice, and favour ; where they conjointly invoked their stars to be propitious, returning thanks for the prospect before them ; nor was it many days, as we shall presently hear, before they were settled in their home stall.

Dolly, who had ever been an early riser, was drest, some hours before Sir Rustick was stirring ; and longing to see her mother, had taken a walk cross the park for that purpose, and entered the little cottage upon them by surprize, as they were all at breakfast, with each a wooden bowl full of water gruel, stuffed with brown bread before them.

At the sight of their daughter in so much finery, (being drest in as rich a silk nightgown as could be purchased, her linnen broad laced, silk shoes, a pearl necklace, gold watch, and diamond rings on her fingers) the old folks started up, standing like images, lest they should behave rudely, or impro-

improperly before her; but she presently demonstrated, that she placed no regard on ceremonials, by first taking old Peat about the neck and kissing him, and then turning to her mother, and repeating the same caresses; when having also saluted her brothers and sisters, and inquired into their welfare, she making them all, (though unwillingly) keep their seats, asked whether they had any remainder of their breakfast unemployed? Smother replying that they had, she desired a mess with them.

Here again, Goody Clod and Smother began, with a thousand apologies, for that they had nothing better to serve it in, than one of their wooden bowls, and to eat it with, than a pewter spoon; but Dolly soon quieted their scruples, by replying; mother, either I am your daughter, or you have mistaken me to have been such; if I am, shall any thing exalt me beyond a condescension to my parents, and their methods? Pray sister, give it me just as you eat it yourself; I have been long accustomed to that, though I may for a short time have refused it. She then sat down, and as they did, cleared her bowl; advising her sisters, if ever it should prove their fortune to meet advancement in life, still to retain in mind their original, and to be ever as ready in prosperity,

prosperity, to minister relief to the indigent, as if themselves still felt their cares, and concerns.

She then inquired what it was that her uncle had presented my dame with in his purse? she replied, fifty three guineas, two Jacobus's, and an half guinea. I hope, said Dolly, you will employ it exactly as he directed. Some little part of it she should, she said; but that one had this, another that, which they could make a shift with, and a third had no great occasion; and as for her gaffer and she, it mattered not much what they wore, so they were but tight, and clean.

Mother, said Dolly, the least one can gratify a benefactor in, is to bestow his favours to his liking, had he sent you a good suit of clothes, would you not have accepted it, because you wanted a feather-bed? Are your other wants multiplied, by granting of some benefits in a peculiar way? I must desire you to employ it wholly to the intent of the donor; there are still eight of you left to be provided for, nor think you shall all be so fine, as when what you shall therewith purchase is gone, to fall into your despised rags again; for I have a method in my brain, that managed with caution, shall still support you all, to the standard
that

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 25

that my uncle's sum will set you forth in. As for yourself, mother, buy a good plain silk, and for my sisters the best of stuffs, for my father a plain cloth, and coarser for my brothers; and that you may not imagine your all to be gone, when you have so done, take these ten guineas as a reserve; look out for some neat box of an easy rent, I will take care for that, and furniture; where my father, yourself, and my sister Ember may reside; as for your other children, they shall all be mine very soon, and be no more a concern of your's. I presume, Spark has told you where he is to settle, with his wife.

Goody Clod replied that he had, but from whence all this happiness should arrive to her gaffer and her in their old age, and not only to them but their children too, she could not conceive, not she.

Mother, said Dolly, you, or my father, have not been wicked people, have you? No truly, she said, they had taken thorough pains for their living, and neither had done, or meant harm to any body. Then who so fair for a blessing? Said Dolly: for though some of your wicked ones gain great riches, they are less happy, run greater risques, and fatigue, more than ever father and you have done, for your

poverty; but believe me, the blessing comes (unexpectedly only) to the honest, and virtuous; what many others may have more, may but be their curse.

Dolly's time being come, that she would be expected to breakfast with Sir Rustick, she left her mother, under assurance of speedily seeing her again; but above all things intreated her, with all convenient haste, to employ her uncle's money to proper use.

In her return, who should she meet, but her uncle; who had been sauntering about the park to air himself, till his brother was stirring. He giving her the compliments of the morning, enquired where she had been so early? She told him; as also the exercise she found them at, and that she had been before-hand with him, having taken her breakfast with them; Well, said he, my dear, and how did it relish now? O! never better, uncle, said she, never better; after I had seasoned it to my taste. He desired to know what seasoning could make such thin diet so agreeable? The good news of better days to them all, said she, through both my papa's liberality.

Mr. Gotham, taking her hand in his; My dear child, said he, for I will ever call you so; how grateful is that seasoning to all

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 27

all good men, and angels, where it proceeds from an heart replete with duty, and love like thine? How many have I observed in my pilgrimage through this world, (for I spent many of my youthful days in publick life) who have despised their low bred parents, even where ministring to their welfare, has induced the indulgent parent's ruin; but where meet we with the rare instance of the prosperous child, who ascending from nothing, ever draws his parent after it, from his native obscurity, to evidence the meanness of its own original, save in thee, my dear? But thy virtues, as they merit, will ever obtain thee blessings.

Young Gotham had been some time upon the hunt for his uncle, and wife, whom he had no sooner spied, than he called them in, where they found all the family waiting for them, but her ladyship, and her daughter Ringwood, who sent their excuse, for that they should breakfast above stairs.

They lived thus for about a week, before her ladyship had ever once appeared again. They had dispatched Spark and his wife to the farm, and the squire taking notice one day to Sir Rustick, what a deal of lumbering furniture there was rotting in his execution room (as it was now jokingly

called) he begged it for Spark, towards house-keeping ; which being granted him, with a small addition of kitchen wares, he and his wife were compleatly set up, having laid out good part of their money in stocking the farm.

Before Mr. Gotham left Addlehall, he gave Dolly an order for the five hundred pounds he had promised her, and young Gotham another for his wife's fortune ; and Sir Rustick likewise paid her what he had promised her ; fifty of which she gave to Spark, and the like sum to old Clod, who having by this time clothed himself and family, they were all invited by Sir Rustick to dinner, and seated in the great hall with the baronet. The sheep were committed to another keeper, Clod and his wife situate in a new house, with their children, nor did they ever more make the despicable figure they had done.

Soon after Mr. Gotham's return home, Sir Rustick told his son and daughter, how unpleasing a thing it was to him, that they should not be permitted to continue with him ; but that it could not be so ; for that he could not observe her ladyship at all to relent towards them, and in such case, it would be better to part ; advising him not to settle far from him. Now this being
what

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 29

what Dolly and the squire had expected, for it would have been unreasonable in Sir Rustick, to have detained them in opposition to her ladyship; Dolly had begged the favour of her husband, whenever that day should come, that he would take her to London, (a place she had heard so much of, but had never seen) for some little time, before they fixed for good, in the country; and this the squire had all along promised he would do.

No sooner therefore had they received their dismissive orders from Addlehall, but, (as they had previously informed Sir Rustick) they set out for London in Sir Rustick's coach and six (one pair of which with the coach, which was almost a new one, he had presented them with, and the other four were to be returned by the servants) taking all their cash with them.

An indifferent person would have expected no good issue from such a journey as this; for London was a place, that neither master, mistress, or servants had ever in their lives seen, nor did either of them know a single soul there; or was it to be supposed that their experience in life would have conducted them safe through the stratagems of that intriguing place; but Dolly having formed her scheme, though it con-

fisted of little more than that there were people of all sorts, sciences, and professions there; she, I say, having it all in her head, away they went like lightning.

All passed smooth enough, and to their satisfaction, while they were upon the road; but no sooner were they entered into the body of Islington, than (taking that for London, by the steeples obliquely before them) the squire called out to Ralph to put up. Ralph being desirous, as he had ever been, for the honour of his master, of fixing at the best inn in the town; seeing two horsemen before him, gave the word to the postilion to stop, and as they came up, pulling off his hat, he very movingly demanded whether that was London, and which was the best inn there? D—n the fellow, says one of them, is he mad, or blind? Can't you see London before you there, pointing to Ralph's left hand?

Poor Ralph was surprized at the ignoble treatment he had received, from a people he had ever esteemed as remarkably polite; but forming to himself the situation of the steeples, he ordered the postilion forwards; when the steeples standing still to the left, he turned down the road to Aldersgate-street, judging that he should by that means fall in with them presently; and

and all might have ended commodiously, had he not, just at the end of Old-street, observed a waggon to turn down it, which Ralph no ways doubting to be destined for London, he hollooe'd the postilion after it, determining with himself, to ask no more questions, but to follow that to its inn.

Ralph now spied the steeples to his right, which caused him no little perplexity ; but being fixed on the waggon for his guide, he still crept slowly after it, till he came to Shoreditch church ; when the waggon twining short down the Kingsland road, Ralph was then so bewildered, that it became necessary to make another complimentary inquiry, before he stirred a step further.

Ralph prudently considered with himself, before he acted so rashly, as to draw a second curse upon his head ; and judging, that the tradesmen would be more courteous than stragglers, such as he had before met with ; he drew a few steps farther, to a farrier's shop, where he had no sooner stopt than out came a black fellow or two, with basket and buttress in hand, imagining he wanted a shoe or a nail, or somewhat in their way ; but Ralph, again doffing his hat, humbly demanded which was the way to the city of London ? The city of London ? echoed the fellow. Yes, Sir, said

Ralph, the city. There, there, said he, turn up, and keep strait forward. Pray how far off is it? Said Ralph, O! a great way to the city, said he, a great way.

This gave Ralph some relief; but sorry he was, it should prove so far off; however, he followed his nose, as his way lay right forward, till he came near Bishopsgate. Here a leading waggon being overturned just at the gate way; and one or two more, with some coaches, waiting for its removal; Ralph observing a building cross the road, judged there could be no further proceeding that way, so turned down Houndsditch, where straggling about, from one inquiry to another, till it was almost dark night, he at last arrived on Tower-hill.

All was now at a stand; Ralph said they were gotten into somebody's yard; and the squire fearing to be put into the pound, would proceed no further till he had gained better information; at length, he spied a woman crossing the hill; he called to her, and brought her to, asking which was the way to the city of London? She directed them back again, but wanted to know whither they would go to? The squire replied, to the city: That's a great place indeed, said she, but to what street or place there? Now they were all a-ground again, for they
knew

knew not the name of any one street, not they; till upon recollection, the postilion called out, that there was such a place as Newgate, which he had many a time heard of. O! replied the woman, if you would go to Newgate, you must turn up here, then to your right, and again to your left, and your right, and any body will tell you where Newgate is.

Ralph was by this time so confounded, that he heartily wished himself at home again; his cattle had come from Dunstable, it was quite dark, and all the way to be puzzled out by inches, nor had he the least notion yet, how far it might be off; all which made so terribly against him, that he was heard to groan, and grumble within, desperately. The devil himself, in his case, he said, would not know how to behave. One says right forward, you can't miss it; another cries to your right, and to your left, and your right, and left, with a pox, and now we have got to Newgate to go; but who knows where that is? I am sure I do not, any more than where the city is. I would I were once well out of this place, and safe landed in Nottinghamshire; if ever I was caught at Newgate again, they should e'en hang me for my folly.

This soliloquy ended, having whistled his cattle, away went Ralph, drag, drag; for man and beast had almost done their best, and were nearly off their mettle. They met with several jostles, from hackney coaches, and carriages, in their way; all which, Ralph bore with christian patience; and at length, under various directions, arrived at Newgate. Ralph imagining he was entering an inn yard, by the gateway, he made under it an halt; then whistling, and hallooing as loud as he could, called hostler, hostler, (for it was only lamp light.) A fellow coming out from the tap-house, demanded what he would have? Ralph begged he would release his master and lady, and shew him the way to the stables; but had not Ralph, (from a stomach full of oaths, and curses that he threw up,) perceived the man's choler to be rising, and made the best of his way off to Snow-hill, he had most certainly been knocked off his box.

He was ascending Holbourn-hill, e'er he had recovered himself from the fright; which the horses being scarce able to climb, he was determined with himself, that if ever they were so happy as to reach the flat ground again, he would not stir a step further, though they should lie in the street all night; but just at the summit of the hill,

Ralph

Ralph having stopt his cattle for a breathing, over a foot crossing; the squire, who was heartily tired of his situation, asked a man who stood waiting near the coach window to get by, if he could recommend him to a good inn? This happening to be the hostler of the Black Swan, he stept to the postilion, and guided him into the yard; but so jaded were they, that thrashing for the whole twenty-four hours had been play to it; however, a good supper, and a night's rest, set all to rights again.

CH A P. III.

Consists of transactions on their arrival at London.

IN the last chapter, after a tedious, and perilous stage of marches and counter-marches, we grounded squire Gotham and his lady at their inn, the Black Swan in Holbourn; where they lay, both master and men, till St. Andrew's bells rang in for church the next morning; nor did they venture further than the inn door all that day, for fear of losing themselves; little expecting, (should that have proved the case) ever to have seen each other more, in

such a place as they had experienced London to be ; for they had made the most of their short time they had been in it, having traversed, and almost quartered it already.

The third day, they took courage to go arm in arm, as far as Middle-row ; the squire bowing, and giving way to every one he met : but they had taken the precaution of setting Ralph at the door, to put them in mind of their return ; lest they should have mistaken, and not have found the house again. They then went as far as the church the other way ; and Ralph, in his post, acquainted them when they were come home.

Thus have I seen a young pigeon act, when first from the locker he has popt his head abroad, nicely to survey his ground, take proper notices ; and after several motions of his head, fly to the nearest stand within sight of his habitation, and from thence back again ; at the next flight, somewhat further, and then return ; till both the flight, and his home growing familiar ; he has, by degrees, taken a fearless circuit in the air, and arrived safe.

So, this loving couple having made the pass of Hatton-garden, Middle-row, and a few others, in security, soon after ranged the town with intrepidity ; which hath of-

ten served to instruct me, that beasts and birds are far from the irrationals we generally account them ; and as men, and they (so far as they have action) proceed upon similar principles, I have cast together some hints, proving, that either men are a better kind of beasts, or beasts but an inferior sort of men ; but I shall not be over hasty in the publication of them.

But to proceed, Ralph, the boy, and horses, were dispatched back the fourth morning, after a genteel gratuity from the squire, charged top-full of compliments, duties and acknowledgments to Sir Rustick, Mr. Clod, and all friends ; and now Dolly first found herself at liberty, for proceeding upon her own plan, which had hitherto rested confined to her single breast only.

There are times and seasons for all things, as the wise man tells us, and as experience confirms ; now that season, which with the ladies is judged most proper for the display of their privacies, is when in bed, and in the arms of their husbands ; they therefore usually seize upon that critical minute, when the heart being open, and unattentive to other cares, is best capable of receiving, and treasuring up what they charge it with ; and this they seldom fail to enforce, so as to demand compliance.

This

This juncture Dolly singled out, for expressing herself to the squire, in somewhat the following manner. My dearest love, said she, not to mention the sincerity of my affection for your person; the gratitude of my nature, must confess the many blessings derived to me, from your benevolence, in making me a partner of every enjoyment in life, in common with yourself; one of the firmest ties for a generous mind, ever to be studious of your well-being.

You are already in possession of this world's goods, in centuple proportion to millions; have further prospects of a still superiour nature from Sir Rustick, and your uncle; what then should prevent your acquisition of every adventitious accomplishment, which shine so in, and distinguish persons of your rank, from the vulgar herd of men? Nor will you be destitute of those honours, if you live, which of themselves, must place you in such eminence of station, as demands merit in the wearer, and regard from all collaterals.

Wherein doth the man of title and fortune differ from the farmer? Or whereby can he display the qualities which denote him such, unless in the ornaments of his mind, and such other endowments, as proclaim themselves in his words and actions?

All

All which, the farmer hath neither time, opportunity, or ability to perfect himself in, neither ever falls it in his way to exert them. The ignorant gentleman can eat, drink, sleep, and hunt ; which, for want of embellishments for other employ, divide the twenty-four hours with him. The farmer doth the very same ; nay, the cobbler disposes himself to the like exercises. The attainments therefore of the mind only, enlarge the capacity for becoming action ; and consequently, are the distinguishing characteristics of the gentleman.

I have studiously weighed our condition, the rank we bear, and the figure we may reasonably be expected to make in the world. I have likewise weighed the various perfections of some others in our sphere, I mean the best of them, against our own, both innate, and acquired ; and as for those, I see not wherein we are behind them ; but in these, we are infinitely deficient. I can perceive myself capable of hourly improvement, from discourse with the more knowing ; which satisfies me, that my faculties want not the comprehension to take in, what myself could not have uttered ; but as I want not apprehension to understand, so could I occasionally deliver their thoughts, had they but been properly imprinted on
3 my

my mind, by custom, information, or reading.

Now how should I be able to attain to these things? Not from myself, or merely by verbal conversation, I am well satisfied; for that, turning for the most part upon the same trifling strain, it is being conversant with books, that must join it, to assist us with a flow of properly adapted words, and conceptions; for I have observed, not only to have been informed of more matter, and hints, in an hour, (when I have heard your father's men at that exercise) but in a different dress, and far more agreeable both to my ear, and tongue; than our company's chit chat could have afforded me in an age.

What a melancholy reflection, disgrace, and disappointment must it be to us, whom providence hath blessed with the good things of life, to no mean degree, not to be able to pen down our sentiments to a friend at a distance, or to read a writing of theirs, without a collateral aid? Will it not naturally be imagined by the world, that our expences have been squandered away upon our passions, rather than our perfections?

What I would drive at, and what drove me to town is, that here, excluded from
every

Squire Gotham and Dolly Clod. 41

every prying eye of our acquaintance, we may make ourselves masters of such accomplishments, as may necessarily render us both acceptable to all men, and useful to ourselves, and them; and first, that we should gain a thorough knowledge in letters; and then a suitable politeness in behaviour, which alone, will give us an air of consequence amongst mankind.

The squire, who had lain all this while as mute as a fish, was but too sensible (from the deficiencies of his own understanding in numberless instances) of the justice of his lady's remarks; and had often wished it otherwise with him, though he had not had resolution to set about it; he therefore expressed his utmost delight, and satisfaction at what she had proposed; and nothing was now wanting, but proper instructor; but who to apply to for that, she had not as yet resolved.

There was a maid servant at the inn, a very handy and useful wench; who in discourse, Dolly had discovered to be her almost country-woman, as being born in the same town where herself had been servant with Esquire Looby. It often gains a particular interest in a person, barely to be known to have been of the same region, which mankind, in greater or less latitude,
as

as circumstances vary, look upon as a sort of remote relationship. This girl therefore, descending from parents somewhat known to Dolly, was received into more than ordinary familiarity with her; and she had often been very near divulging her wants to her, and seeking her assistance; but Dolly, who never acted hand over head in any thing, had yet judgment enough to conceal from the servant, all knowledge of who, and what she was; not that I would have you imagine, her reserve proceeded from pride; for no more of that, than was consistent with decency, had ever fallen to Dolly's share; but for the preserving a just decorum between them, and to prevent such gossiping tales, and idle whispers, as spreading like wild-fire from one female to another, blast characters of third persons in meer folly, and unthinkingness; for though Dolly was no ways ashamed of her original, amongst those who knew her and her parents; yet her modesty prevented its communication amongst strangers, who are too prone to reflections on the most innocent occasions; she being one, who chose not to be over-much talked of.

They had been about fourteen days in town, during which time, they had made some progress about the streets, and had remarked

ed on all they had seen ; when one day, observing a large black board to hang out for a sign, with abundance of whirligigs and flourishes upon it, neither representing bird, beast, fish, or vegetable, they were both at a stand for the meaning of it. The squire fancied, upon a scrupulous survey, that he saw somewhat like letters upon it ; but they being so disguised by useless ornaments, he could make nothing of them ; when some one happening to pass by as they were staring at it, he on course cast up his eyes too ; (for the earnest direction of one or two faces to a particular point, will draw a whole street after them, being to the full as catching, as gaping) he, I say, looking at it too, the squire put the question, what that was a sign of ? The man then read over, that writing, reading, and arithmetick was taught there, by Joseph Quill.

While he was explaining the sign, the squire spying a paper pasted upon the window, with other strange scratches upon it, said, he presumed, that too was somewhat of the same nature with the other ; but was answered, no ; that was only to give notice, that lodgings were to be let within.

Never fell any thing out more lucky than this ; for Dolly longed to be at school, though she chose not to be remarked for it ;
which

which was the reason, she had not as yet had a master to attend her at the inn : but now, if she could lodge in the same house with her preceptor, nothing could be more a propos ; it would but be either master, or scholar shifting rooms, and the business was done, all within themselves too.

This happening in one of the private streets near Red-Lyon-Square, they walked on to the end of it, to consider how they should proceed ; but every imagination, centering in their fixing at this writing master's, they boldly venturing in, were shewn the lodgings, agreed for, and took them by the week, ready furnished ; after having satisfied Mr. Quill's lady, that they were people of fashion, had their coach in town, and would pay her before-hand, if required.

Every thing about them appearing very gay, Mrs. Quill enquired after their servants, and whether they wanted not some accommodation for them ? But Dolly replied, that having sent their servants back with two pair of the set of horses they came with, they had rather pay for the use of her maid, than trouble themselves with others, till they were somewhat more settled.

In short, they agreed for the servant, board, linnen, fire, candle, and whatever else

else they should want, at so handsome a rate, that Mrs. Quill hoped for excellent boarders of them; so sending for their boxes from the inn, they entirely fixed with Mrs. Quill.

She had been house-keeper, in her early years, to a country squire in Westmoreland, was a tolerable judicious woman, and understood herself as well as most folks; nor had many days passed, before no two were more intimate than Dolly and she; when perceiving that she had received a liberal education, and was a person worthy of confidence, Dolly unravelled part of her history to her; as that her husband being born to a great estate, such neglect had been had of his polishing, that he was almost wholly deficient in his writing, and reading; that for her own part, though not descending from such rich parents, she was unable, of herself, to instruct him, which was the reason of their preferring her house to any other, where they might be privately initiated, into such necessary qualifications; and though she was somewhat shy at first, of mentioning their imperfections, yet now she had so done, she would lose no time in providing a remedy.

Mrs. Quill gave her to understand, that it was not her misfortune alone, and her huf-

husband's; but that of too many whom she could name, in her own country, whose sole estimation was their estate, without seeking any thing further; but highly commended her attempt, to recal her past neglect; then sending for her husband, Dolly agreed with him for their learning, at his own price; adding, that the sooner he could perfect them, the more ample should the gratuity she would bestow upon him be, over and above his stipulated pay.

The squire, and Dolly, were now all hands at their A, B, C; sticking closely to it, almost day and night for the first month, or more; till by sedulous application, and emulating of each other, they were very capable of spelling most words, and in double the time, of reading, though but slowly.

They had now taken pen in hand, and had their letters to travel through once more, when so soon as they were able to write correctly, Mr. Quill put them upon sending letters to himself and wife, which they answered; and by that means, carried on an epistolary correspondence, of all general occurrences; till they were so proud of the perfection they had gained that way, that they each wrote a letter to Sir Rustick; nor would Dolly be restrained, from attempting to ingratiate

gratiate herself to my lady, if possible, by the same means. They both wrote to Clod and his wife, declaring the letters to be of their own hand-writing; nor need a scholar, of far beyond their standing, have had the least cause to disclaim title to them; they received answers to all but my lady's, read them with facility, and made polite replies, without difficulty; so that having this new scene opened to them, they soon became quite other creatures.

Since the squire had been able to read the news, a neighbouring coffee-house had furnished him with the knowledge of several gentlemen, in and about the square, (for they had scarce ever stirred abroad for the first four months) who in conversation, collecting that he was married, and was come to town for some stay, invited him to their houses; and their ladies and daughters visited Dolly, who punctually returning the compliments, they were presently engaged in a very genteel knot of acquaintance; when being willing to appear like their neighbours, they hired a coachman, footman, and two maids; and brushing up the coach, visited in it, and were soon ushered into the reigning diversions of the town; till in few months more, they cut as gay a figure as most folks.

Dolly,

Dolly, who had a true taste for every excellence, so fast as they unfolded themselves to her view; having observed, that neither the squire, or herself, could cast themselves into those graceful attitudes, which several of their acquaintance did, resolved to learn to dance, and prevailed upon the squire to do the same; and now they began that exercise for three days in the week; Dolly also at the same time learning French, and musick; but neither of these would the squire engage in, for a long time; till at Dolly's intreaties (for that at her return to the country, she should lose all her French if she had no body to converse with) he was persuaded to that.

After the first year of their residence in town, they took an house, and kept a family proper; and behaving in the most courteous and polite manner to every one; they gained the universal esteem of all around them, and were daily courted for fresh acquaintance.

Now it was, that Dolly sent for her brothers and sisters to town, all but Ember: she put them all to school, for reading, writing, and accompts; where after eighteen months employment that way, she settled the three boys out apprentices, but retained the two girls at home, under such regula-

regulations and restrictions, and under such preceptors, as she saw convenient for their improvement. She soon married Smother to her grocer, giving her an hundred pounds; but Blaze taking great delight in needle-work, and but little inclining to matrimony, she placed her partner with a milliner, for the like sum, whereby she, also, was provided for.

The squire had by this time become acquainted with the nature of publick securities, and had placed his money in the funds; and Dolly, who was exceedingly inquisitive after knowledge; had, from their broker, fished out the nature of annuities for lives, and their value; which very much approving of for her parents, she caused him to purchase one of thirty pounds a year, for the life of her sister Ember, payable to her father and mother; but after their deaths, to Ember; for which, she paid three hundred pounds; and now she had only the boys to maintain, whose remainders of their hundred pounds a-piece she placed in the funds, with one overplus hundred she had in hand, the income of which, she appropriated for their cloathing, reserving the principle, to set them up with, when they should be out of their

times; but in case Spark should want, then fifty pounds more was to go to him.

The squire spent upwards of three years in town; during which time, Dolly had brought him two children, a son and daughter; and now having executed the most material affairs which brought them thither, and had engrossed their whole attention there, they bent their minds to the country; for though Dolly had entered into the spirit of most of the town gaieties, had engaged in all the politest assemblies, and discharged her part there with universal applause; yet she retained no other fondness for, or took other delight in them, than as they were contributive to that embellishment, both in body and mind, which she coveted to shine with; so that having fully perfected her design, it was with no more reluctance that she quitted, than she had at first set out for London.

They had wrote to Spark some time before their return, to look out for an house for them, not exceeding five miles distance from Sir Rustick's, and to send them word what progress he made; so that as soon as Spark had made provision for them, they began their journey, having laid in a large stock of the most fashionable apparel, to serve them for some years; but Dolly (her huf-

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 51

husband having given her a sum to dispose for her own use) had baulked her finery by a full half, for the emolument of Clod and his wife, at her return.

Intending to drive with four horses, the squire had purchased a new chariot, as lighter of draught in the winter than his large coach; so that he bought a new pair of horses for that, and hiring four for his coach, himself and lady in the chariot, two servant maids and the nurses, with the children in the coach, and two servant men on horseback, sallied forth for Nottinghamshire, little expecting ever to see London more.

C H A P. IV.

Squire Richard and Dolly return to Nottinghamshire. Account of Scriven and wife. Squire Richard's reception at Addleball.

N O sooner had her ladyship heard that her son had taken an house in the neighbourhood, and that he and his wife were upon the road to it, than judging they might first call at Sir Rustick's for a few days, while it might be put in order for them, she sent for her son and daughter

Ringwood to bear her company, that she might have some one to back her opposition to Dolly, whose very name was, as yet, her aversion.

The squire and his lady alighted at their own hired house, without going out of their way to Addlehall; but the appearance they made through the parish, soon reached the baronet's, to the no small mortification of her ladyship; every tongue, for some days after their return, resounding little but the politeness of young Mr. Gotham, and the charming figure that his lady made; inso-much, that her ladyship's inveteracy against her mean birth and parentage, was, with her daughter Ringwood's, turned into rank envy of her person; for it was agreed by every one who had yet seen her, that she was, by far, the compleatest lady in the whole country.

In proportion to the fall of her ladyship's crest upon these reports, just so much more erect stood the knight's, at the superiority of his distinguishing judgment; and Ringwood and his wife were upon the point to burst, at the constant repetitions of Dolly's praises; applying each commendatory syllable on her, in defalcation of Mrs. Ringwood.

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 53

Sir Rustick, the third morning of their return, sent a complimentary inquiry into their healths; to which they returned the most genteel answer possible; which the servant delivering, when they were all at dinner, Sir Rustick asked him, if he had seen his son and daughter? Daughter! said her ladyship, rynecerically, (which Ringwood and his wife returned with a sneer) Daughter! The fellow replied, that he had; but she would have been the last person in the world, that he should have taken for his young master's lady, if he had not seen her leaning on his shoulder. An impudent slut, said my lady; at which, the two Ringwoods turned up the whites of their eyes too. What do'st mean by not knowing her? Said Sir Rustick, has she been ill? No, no, sir, replied he, she has certainly been well enough, one might see by her countenance; but sure, so sweet a lady eyes never beheld; so complaisant, so good-natured, free, easy, affable, and withal so genteel, that she perfectly charmed me. Bless me, sir, said he, she was drest so becoming, and looked so beautiful, I shall never forget her, I think; and all the servants give her such a character; they say there is no such thing as making her an-

D 3 *gry;*

gry ; they perfectly adcre her. She is a lovely woman to be sure, that she is.

Her ladyship had bitten her lips till they bled, at the man's tale ; but durst not interrupt him, the knight sucked it in so cordially ; till making a pause ; surely Will, said she, my son paid you well for the carriage of all this budget of lies. No, truth madam, said he, he did not ; but whoever that sees her, shall report otherwise, lies, and that I'll tell him to his face, be he who he will. But Will, said Sir Rustick, you bring me no particulars from my son, how is he ? I saw, sir, replied he, the gentleman that used to answer to my master Richard ; but that London, to be sure is a strange place, it alters people so ! What said he to thee ? asked Sir Rustick : Sir, said Will, he was drest so fine, as I never saw the like before ; and so observing me to stare so at his lady, for I could not have taken my eyes off her, an I were to be hanged, not I ; so he said something in French, as his man told me afterwards it was, to which she answered ; and after a short conversation, which I did not understand, he turned to me : present our humblest duty to your master and lady, inform them of our healths, how we rejoyce at theirs, and are languishing for an opportunity of prostrating at their feet.

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 55

feet. A vain coxcomb! said her ladyship, it is this bombast stuff that captivates such ignorant wretches as thou art. They know no better, madam, added Mrs. Ringwood.

Will having performed his part, was moving off; when, as bethinking himself, and instantly returning; O! dear sir, said he, I had like to have forgotten the very best thing of all. How so? said Sir Rustick, what is that? Why sir, added he, I saw your worship's two little grand-children. What? said her ladyship, clods, meer clods, I presume. O madam! replied he, the sweetest babies, and so drest! The eldest is a fine young master indeed; but little miss, with her fat, jolly, round face, is as like to your ladyship, as one pea is to another. I know not how you may intend it, Will, said her ladyship; but it is small compliment to me, that I bear any resemblance to the brood of the Clods, I'll assure you.

We shall leave her ladyship and her daughter, to chew over Will's report of Dolly, which was as grateful to them, as the sight of their house on fire, and make some enquiry into the affairs of poor Scriven and his wife.

It is to be noted, as we have before hinted, that her ladyship never cared a rush for

either of her daughters, her son having been her sole favourite; but the prejudice she had conceived against him since his marriage, had turned her affection towards them; till Scriven's wife, having expressed herself in favour of Dolly, her ladyship's whole esteem had centered in her daughter Ringwood: so that soon after the squire's departure, Scriven suffering egregiously from her ladyship's ill usage, had procured himself a post amongst the smelters in Derbyshire, which brought him in a scanty subsistence, and to which his wife and he had retired.

He had scarce enjoyed this post two years, before one of the partners in the work dying; the survivor, who had not been bred to it, but had added his stock to the other's skill, being unable of himself to prosecute the business, took in Scriven partner with him, he perfectly understanding it.

The trade was so very considerable, that he had not been four years for himself, before he kept his chariot, and was worth some thousand pounds; and at the end of seven years, his partner dying, he was of ability to pay off his part of the stock to his executors, and to carry on the whole upon his own bottom, where he continued flourishing, till he had amassed a vast sum.

I thought

I thought it best to give this account of Scriven here, that my reader might not be interrupted with the particular alterations of his affairs, in the course of the history of Sir Rustick's family, nearer home.

Few days only had passed, before the squire and his lady paid their duty to Sir Rustick, whom they found in his parlour alone; her ladyship, Ringwood, and his wife, being upon a walk in the garden. The good knight was so greatly delighted with Dolly's speech, air, and mien, that he could not recal his eyes from her; but causing her to sit by him, held her hand in his, for most part of the visit.

It was not long before the ladies returned from the garden, ignorant as yet what company were in the parlour. Her ladyship was the first who entered, and beholding such unwelcome faces, was about to have turned back again; but her son Ringwood being too close at her heels, for that, the knight called her in; assuring her, that there was nobody with him whom she need be ashamed of.

The squire and Dolly rose up to compliment her, but taking little or no notice of them, she seated herself. Dolly, who by this time, differed as widely in her expressions, from herself at their last interview,

as in her behaviour, arising from her seat, moved gracefully towards her ladyship, and in the softest language, and most engaging accent, humbly besought her indulgence, both to herself and spouse; gave her every assurance of their inviolable affection for her, and made use of such arguments, both for her ladyship's peace, and her own, as she esteemed most conducive to that end; but no intreaty would prevail with the obdurate lady, for a remission of the least part of the prejudice she had harboured against them.

Wife, said Sir Rustick, you are to blame; what can my daughter say, or do, more than she has? Prithee be easy, take comfort in your children. My children! said her ladyship; Doll Clod my child! No, Sir Rustick, if your base spirit can away with such things, I have been bred in another manner, than to be coupled with Goody Clod in the property of this creature. See you but how she gallants it in my son's feathers? How she curls, and powders, and bridles, with her laces, and jewels? Are these fit things for Doll Clod? — I shall go mad, I tell you, if ever I see her more. —

Would you think it, daughter Ringwood, added she; there was Gaffar Clod, our poor shepherd but the other day, met me a while

while ago in the church-yard, dress'd as fine I'll warrant you, as if he had born the king's commission in his pocket ; and awkwardly pulling off his clumsy hat, asked how my ladyship did ; a filthy fellow ! nay, I was ready to die away for fear, lest the sorry wretch should have called me sister, before all the congregation. My colour came, and went, and I trembled so, that I profess, I was scarce able to crawl to my chariot ; and now I am to be pestered with one of his spawn, am I ?

Sir Rustick, no longer able to bear this scandalous treatment ; daughter Ringwood, said he, why don't you use your interest to moderate your mother's fury, and mediate between your sister and her ? My sister ! sir ; your shepherd's daughter, my sister ! replied she. I presume, her ladyship best understands the management of her own servants, and their brood. Truth sir, she's no sister for me ; I loath the scum she arises from : and though duty binds me to silence as to yourself, sir ; yet, at my heart, I can but wonder, to see you doating upon such a creature as that is ; then, having learned a few French words, from a servant her ladyship once had, who had lived in a French family ; and thinking to put Dolly to the blush, that her father might be sensible

able Will's story of their talking French was but a forgery; *parlez vous François?* said she to Dolly. Ouy, madam, said Dolly, and ran on with an enquiry of some length; to which Mrs. Ringwood not being able to reply, she was so dashed, that she could scarce bear it.

This set Sir Rustick to laughing so heartily, and to calling out answer her, daughter Ringwood, answer her, in such derision of the poor lady, that both mother and daughter fled the pit; nor did Dolly ever see either of them, for several years afterwards.

Sir Rustick, both excused, and condemned the pride of his wife and daughter, and ordering Dolly not to mind them; the squire (who since his journey to London, scrupled not to take a moderate glass of wine upon occasion) and he, sat down to their bottle till evening, when Mr. Richard and his lady returned; and from that day the knight and he visited once a week constantly.

The next visit the squire and Dolly made, was to Mr. Clod's, where she informed them of the disposition of their children; and having given order for their rent, and a few necessaries, she took them nearer to her, to a little house which was apart from, but went under

under the rent of her own; and having them thus under her eye, both she, and they lived to the extremity of earthly satisfaction.

The whole country round paid their compliments to Dolly; who, by her courtesy, and sweetness of behaviour, gained the hearts of every creature who had the least knowledge of her; but no remonstrances of the neighbouring gentry, or of Sir Rustick himself, would move her ladyship to acknowledge the kindred Dolly bore to her.

C H A P. V.

Adventures at Nottingham races.

DOLLY's charms increasing annually, notwithstanding her constant child-bearing, (for she failed not for many years of a child in each, till her number amounted to eleven) though she was the remotest person upon earth from affording the least encouragement to bad practices; yet the lively bloom she glowed with, had procured her no small number of admirers; many of whose impertinences she had at times severely rebuffed, and with becoming indignation; but all that she could do,
would

would not wholly free her from the importunities of that base set of vermin.

The squire, who now joined all manner of good company, being beloved and caressed by all, had taken Dolly with him to Nottingham races; where after the sport in the field, there was a grand entertainment, and a ball for the ladies: they being mostly of that, and the adjacent counties. After supper, and warming themselves with mirth, wine, and dancing; the cushion dance was proposed as an healer, to conclude the evening with.

They consisted of a very long train, hand in hand, in which exercise Dolly would fain have been excused from taking a part, and had several times declined being addressed to, when the cushion had been dropt before her, even till herself was the last person in the company unpaired; when a young gentleman, then a stranger to every one (but whose name was afterwards known to be Thomas Manly) having purposely shifted his station, till he might gain an opportunity of offering her his hand, being taken into the string, he placed the cushion before her.

She formed every excuse that she could invent for avoiding him, as that she was really tired, was out of order, had already refused,

refused, and many others; but all would not do, she remained uncoupled, and he must have a partner. Dolly, at length, perceiving the company all at a stand, and upon her account too; that she might not be guilty of downright rudeness, gave him her hand, and was the last person in the parade.

All were now in motion, and the fidler marching in the van, away they went as that will i'th' wisp led them; up here, down there, over tables, beds and boxes, from the cellar to the garret. The touch of Dolly's warmth had so invigorated her partner's passion for her, that he determined at any rate to compass his aim, if possible; and as they were galloping apace through the last garret, just at the head of the back-stairs, (the bed lying in their way) the leaders went over it, and through the door close beyond it.

Our spark, young Manly, having drawn Dolly upon the bed after him; by pretending a fall, quitted the hand of the lady before him, and flapping the door to, and bolting it, he turned upon Dolly who had fallen behind him; and e'er she could possibly rise, threw himself into such a posture, as but too plainly indicated the villainy of his heart; nor made he the least scruple of accom-

accompanying his actions, with words declaratory of his purpose.

Dolly being thus surprized, and caught (as I may say) in a trap; (no one being a better judge than herself of what was attainable by strength) and perceiving the little probability there was of defending herself, as she then lay at his mercy, (for had she but been at liberty, she had not mattered twice our youngster's force) recollecting with herself how vain her cries would prove, it being impossible they should be heard through the musick, and licentious shoutings of that confused night; she set her invention to stratagem. Hark! said she; (seemingly complying with his desires) be silent, or I am undone; then (as if for greater caution and privacy) observing the other door which they entered at to be upon the jar, she begged him to shut it, for fear of a surprize.

Our amorous spark, imagining no less to be signified thereby, than Dolly's total resignation and assent, immediately ran to secure it; but Dolly in the interim, having jumpt from the other side of the bed, had placed herself upon the defensive, just in the glare of the moon, (which then shone very bright in at the window) where she might best observe his approach.

She

Squire Gotham and Dolly Clod. 65

She had once an inclination for unbolting the door behind her, and attempting to have fled down stairs; but unwilling to give the adversary the advantage of her rear, she bravely stood her ground, with a wooden chair in her hand, uttering defiance, and desiring him to retreat through the door he had last shut, unless he should prove so stupid, as to seek his death at her hands.

Manly, at seeing himself thus jilted, swore, begged, stormed, and threatened; but all wholly in vain: for the inexorable Dolly, denounced only positive destruction to the head, whose hand should but offer to molest her.

At length, Manly ashamed at being thus menaced by a woman, and inflamed by his ardour for the prize; by an unexpected push, rushed within the fall of her weapon. Now thou cruel fair! said he, I think thou art mine; nor all the devils in hell shall ever more disjoin us, till thou art wholly so: then striving to swing her round upon the bed again, he soon found, that not to be so light a task as he had imagined; for he made no more way with her, (though a lusty young fellow) than had he been grasping the pillar of a church. Then quitting her waist, which he had till then held, hoping for a better exertion of his abilities
from

from the swing by a single arm only ; while he was catching at that, she seized him by the collar, and by one of her wrestling trips, threw him with such force against the bedstead, as almost fractured his skull ; but he clinging fast to her petticoat, would not quit his hold till he was up again.

Dolly began to reason with him, on the heinousness of the crime he had offered at the commission of ; the injury it would be to herself, and the distress to her husband, should he gain his end ; and advising him to withdraw, assured him, she'd pass by what had been done without more words ; but added, that should his obstinacy still urge him to prosecute his purpose, he must thank himself only, if severer usage than he had hitherto met with should befall him ; for that she was not a woman that was to be forced, by such a green head as his.

This reflection stinging Manly to the quick ; he vowed, that he still persisting in his resolution, would either prosecute it with effect, or die in the attempt ; then seeming resolute to renew the assault ; Dolly, whose eye had travelled the circuit of the room, for spying where her advantage lay ; having observed a poker in the chimney, and hastily snatching it up ; now, sir, come on, said she ; exert your baseness against
against

against my vertue, try your utmost, and if I am not too hard for you, may I perish in my own defence.

The weapon was dangerous ; but Manly laying hands on a shifting bar of the grate, and securing it, was rather determined to act offensively, than only tamely to suffer violence.

The love scene, being by this time turned into that of an implacable rage, he flew to the battle in good earnest, menacing her with destruction ; and vowing, that he had rather find her dead at his feet, than she should ever live to boast her escape from his hands ; then stepping forward under the guard of his weapon, in order to have seized her again, he received such a blow on the shoulder with the poker, as made him reel ; whereby perceiving her to be in earnest, his fury rising in competition with his love, outweighed it ; when swearing revenge, and offering to take it by so home a stroke, as he doubted not would quiet her ; Dolly putting it coolly aside with the poker, dealt him such a knock on the crown, as stretched him at length at her feet : then slipping off her garter, and therewith tying his hands behind him, she sat herself upon the bed, till her captive (if ever he recovered) should be able to
con-

conduct himself, to the presence of the rest of her company.

It was not long, before his shattered brains had resumed their prior situation, which the jar on his skull had discomposed, and she heard him groan inwardly; then shaking him a little, and raising him on his feet, she commanded him to walk before her. I need not signify his unwillingness for the duty; he supplicated, he soothed, he besought, he stated consequences, and vowed amendment; but the time was elapsed, he might have come off so before; but it was now too late to expect it, for down he should go, or she would drive him by such rough methods, as should enforce him to repent his obstinacy.

There being no alternative, he sat forwards, with Dolly close at his heels; the iron bar in her right hand, and the poker in her left, in their way to the dancing room, where the company were collected to refresh themselves.

Dolly had been missed by some, and Manly by others; and strange whispering there had been for some time amongst them, upon the occasion; nor wanted there insinuations from some of the good ladies, relative to the cause of their absence; though there were yet others, who from the approved

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 69

proved virtue of Dolly would not come into the reflections; when presently entered Manly, without hat or wig, his head bleeding from more issues than one, his hands tied behind him, and Dolly in his rear, doubly armed.

The whole assembly rose, with general murmur, at this amazing spectacle; when driving Manly into the middle before them all, Dolly began. Gentlemen and ladies, said she, it's possible, that with the oddity of the scene which my prisoner and I present you with, we may conclude the frolicks of this night. I doubt not, but you are equally surprized at beholding a lady thus roughly armed, as at the scurvy figure my squire makes; but the fortune of war, you all know to be inconstant, nor always declaring for the most deserving champion.

You are all sensible with what reluctance I engaged at all in your romping exercise; but my captive having more in his head than you guessed, even to rudeness, insisting upon leading me forth, I acquiesced. We had traversed half the house, and you were all descending the garret stairs, before I had the least room to suspect what an ill opinion this gentleman (clapping the poker on his bare skull) had conceived of me.

He

He leading me, who was then the last of the string, and shamming a fall, quitted the hand of the lady next before him, who was drawn down after you, pulled me after him, shut the door, and gave me the broadest hints of such ungenerous designs upon me, as with the utmost difficulty, and not without stratagem, I have avoided. Having recovered my legs, I would have pretermitted the offence, on fair quarters given me, rather than have discomposed so much good company by my complaint; but nothing less than a sacrifice of my virtue would content this brutish fellow; for vowing that he would never quit so fair an opportunity, he seized me by force, and would have compelled me to his villainous purposes, had I not that instant, recollected my ancestry; then shaking off the softness of Mrs. Gotham, I resumed the robustity of Doll Clod; and by catching him by the collar, and tripping up his heels, I sent his head of such an errand against the bedstead, as will, for some time, remain bleeding fresh in his memory.

This, one would have imagined, should have proved a prevailing memento, to have regulated his future conduct by; and hoping it would have so proved, I suffered him to rise, though then absolutely at my mercy;

but he, vile traitor! contrary to all law of arms, had no sooner recovered from the stupor his fall had cast him into, than he renewed the assault with double violence. I own, I then beheld him as one abandoned to shame, and behaved no longer to him as a valiant antagonist; but as an ignominious robber, and ravisher.

I applied my right hand to this poker, while he seized this iron bar; and making at me with more than savage fury, seemed to covet nothing further than the free possession of my slaughtered corps, which undoubtedly had been his own by this time, had I not diverted the impending blow, and fallen within his guard, whereby I opened such a chasm in his empty skull, as tamed his rage, and prostrated him again at my feet.

He had previously forfeited all title to honourable treatment from me; so that having bound, I have hither driven him as my captive, to receive his doom from your suffrage.

Squire Richard had been rising several times, but was with-held by those next him; for he having learnt from what had passed, that his freehold had been endangered, was scarce to be restrained, from distributing his instant benevolence upon
the

the mangled scone of the intruder : nor were some other of Dolly's admirers, (tho' not in so rough a way,) to be prevented from testifying their detestation of so unparalleled a proceeding, and infringement on civil society.

Dolly put again the question, how they would please to dispose of the criminal ? for she took the intended injury, not only as an affront to herself, but to the whole company of ladies, any one of whose chance it might have been, to have struggled with her abuse, had the offender but taken it into his head that he had occasion for her ?

Some were for stripping him stark naked, tossing him in a blanket at the Market-cross, and driving him out of the town. Some for one thing, some another ; but the more moderate being of the majority, with whom the rest agreed, they unanimously declared him infamous, unworthy of future society, and ordered him on his bare knees, first to crave pardon of the irritated Dolly, next of the injured squire, then of the whole company ; and lastly, to engage to leave Nottingham and all its districts, by the first morning light, never more to appear therein, or before any of the then present company.

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 73

Poor Manly, having performed the first articles of this penance, and sworn to the latter, (as he joyfully would to whatever would have procured his dismissal) his hands being loosed, he was turned out, under the discharge of a tripple hiss. And thus concluded the first adventure of Thomas Manly, Esq;

The whole assembly congratulated Dolly upon her happy escape; the gentlemen extolled her prowess to the skies, while the ladies admired, they said, how it was possible for her to cope with so strong, and able bodied a man as Mr. Manly. One should have been frightened to death, she said, at his having her down; another should have screamed herself into fits; a third could not have had the power to have struggled with him; and a fourth declared, that he might have done what he pleased with her, in so lonely a place, and by midnight. In short, not a lady in the room, but acknowledged how far short of Dolly's bravery she should have behaved, under such a conflict.

They then ran a division upon the consequences of such a fact, had it been perpetrated. The honour, the chastity, the affection, the felicity, the what not, that must have been sufferers in the engagement;

and then shifting the scene, aggravated the regard that a man ought to bear to that woman, who had come off conqueror in so severe a trial; till in short, they had exalted Dolly to that perfect creature, which every man would wish for his own; and had extirpated from her composition, whatever might be refuse, or discommendable.

These encomiums upon his dearest Dolly, the squire could have indulged over till that time twelve months; had not a summons to bed, given him an opportunity of enjoyment, with the subject herself, of all their praises.

CHAP. VI.

Adventure at Loughborough races.

I Need use but few arguments, to obtain my reader's belief, that Manly had so ill a night's rest of it, as not to detain him long in the morning, before he was mounted and gone off; but there still remaining another day's sport, most of the rest of the company saw that out, before they departed.

Manly's catastrophe had furnished them with a noble fund of discourse, for the next day;

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 75

day ; and several had threatened to kick him off the course, should he assume the front to appear there : but he had too much wit in his fury for that, and had made the best of his way to London. Now, though Manly had, to such a degree, smarted for his folly in the flesh, yet was not he so intirely subdued, but that his vice was still predominant in his heart ; nor would he yet part with the pleasing hopes of the subduction of the heroick fair, whose valour had but set so much a more keen edge to his unruly appetite, by how much the difficulty of obtaining her, appeared more insurmountable.

But leaving him to pursue his own measures, let us step back to our company, whom we shall meet with all alert, and stirring about for their breakfasts, in high expectation of the afternoon's sport, and another merry evening.

Never were so many people met together before, who so entirely fell in with each other's taste ; not a dissenting voice appearing in the whole community, from their first appearance, to their departure, which gave them all such general satisfaction, that it not being long to Loughborough races, they agreed, *nemine contradicente*, to renew
E 2 their

their good fellowship there also, for the sake of each other's conversation.

The time came on, and the company arrived; but every one having reported the good harmony of the Nottingham meeting, had engaged many other friends to be of the party; so that there was no such thing as procuring half room enough for the guests, either in publick, or private lodgings, within any distance of the place of rendezvous; insomuch, that the gentlemen lay most of them three or four in a bed, and most of the junior ladies so too, after the first night.

There was a very genteel and agreeable lady; who, though she afterwards appeared to have been a stranger to every body, was yet thought by all, to have been known to many in the company, by her ready address, and easy familiarity with most of them. This lady, had by a peculiar sort of placid behaviour to Dolly, so ingratiated herself into her favour, by the fourth night; that in sharing of beds, she pretending to have a mortal aversion to lying three in a bed, took Dolly in search of some chamber with a bed, which would hold no more than two; and as a piece of jockeyship to the rest of the company, prevailed with her to join in the choice of it with her; by which means,

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 77

means, they two might enjoy it without interruption.

This scheme was so agreeable to Dolly, that they went upon the search; and the stranger, being previously apprized of it, soon led her to one to their mind; when having fixed upon it, the stranger, by way of precaution, lest any one should be before-hand with them, locked the door, and took the key with her.

The day passed most agreeably, and the evening concluded with country dancing; but a little before this was ended, the stranger complaining of a violent head-ach, told Dolly, she would go to bed before the dancing broke up, and leave the door on the latch for her.

It was a full hour before the company withdrew; when Dolly, greatly delighted at the prospect but of one companion, when scarce any other lady had less than two, retired to her chamber; upon the entering it, she imagined her bedfellow to be asleep, by hearing her breathe hard; for which reason, she did not speak to her; but having always accustomed herself to some private transactions before she went to rest, she withdrew for the purpose, to one corner of the room, for about a quarter of an hour; then taking her candle, according to her

usual course every night, both at home and abroad, she looked round the room, and under the bed, to see that all was safe; but crept about very softly, lest she should disturb the young lady her companion, who by this time snored most powerfully.

As Dolly passed her side of the bed in her walk, casting her eye upon her, she was struck with the sight of an hand, which seemed no ways adapted to her chum; but looking still more narrowly, how was she thunderstruck, when she saw the very face of Manly himself, and a cornelian ring on his finger, which had before occupied that post at Nottingham!

She withdrew the light immediately, and retreated, to deliberate how she should behave, under her present circumstances. Her indignation thickened so fast, that she was resolved to be up with him, cost what it would; and by some means or other, to give him his belly full of these frolics: for having discovered him before she was undressed, she was under the less apprehension of danger from him. She had a violent inclination for exposing him, directly, to the company; but as they had all retired when she did, and were most of them (as she presumed) undrest, or in bed; she could not judge it prudent to raise any commotion

motion amongst them that night; chusing rather, to reserve him for their entertainment the next day; so that carrying off all his cloaths; which were the very apparel of the young female stranger, and locking the door after her, she purposed either to sit up all night, or if any of the maids were stirring, to get a loll on one of their beds, till morning.

She found some of the servants up, and was about to have disclosed her mind to one of them; when a sudden start took her fancy, to inquire, whether she could by any means procure her some very strong pack-thread, and a packing needle. Some hesitation was at first made, till one of the men replied, that his master always kept such things in a drawer in his bar; so that the wench searching, soon produced a sufficiency to supply Dolly's wants: when spying a thin two-penny cord there, she borrowed that also.

She had a vast propensity for letting the maid into the secret, and begging her aid in the affair; but being resolutely bent on her project; and lest the maid, if she came not heartily into it, should by some means render it abortive; she determined to proceed upon her own bottom; little dreading Manly in his present defenceless state, whom

she had so lately advantageously coped with, more even handed.

She returned again to her chamber, where finding him still snoring, she rolled all the upper bed clothes close to his back, as gently as possible; then turned the under sheet, and blanket, quite cross him to his side of the bed, when beginning at the feet of the bed; in the middle, she sewed up the under blanket and sheet, round to the bed's head, and then cross to the middle again, at top.

Dolly rejoiced exceedingly, that he was not yet awakened; but fearing that he had still too much room, she took fresh stitches, deeper and deeper into the clothes, till he was tolerably tight, as high as his shoulders; when fearing to smother him, by straitening the clothes about his mouth; she took the cord, and with a running noose fastening it about his ancles, she found him stir, and believed he might be about awaking; when casting the cord to the further side of the bed, she fell violently to rolling him up in it, running her hands under him, and turning him over as fast as possible, till she had surrounded him with several folds, as high as his neck, where she fastened it; then tying up all the clothes tight above his head, (he roaring out like a bull all the time,

time, and swearing that he was just choaked) upon his promise of peaceable behaviour, she not only informed him of his persecutor, but engaged to grant him free room for breathing; so, that she might not strain the joke too high, she with her scissars, cut a round hole thorough all to his mouth; then laying herself down behind him upon the feather-bed, she rested contentedly till morning.

Sleep, she could not: nor indeed did she attempt it, for fear of some unforeseen event in the interim; but pleasing herself to discourse him, under so much security, she was very desirous of knowing who, and where, her intended bedfellow was; for she was by this time well assured of her being an accomplice with him?

Upon her demand of that question, he promised and swore, that if she would but release him, he would not only discover the whole contrivance to her, but also engage himself, by the strongest oaths, bonds, and obligations, never more to molest her; but Dolly was not to be diverted from her purpose, by the plausibility of his pretences; for she told him, that as most of the same company were then at the races, which had passed his first sentence upon him, they must have the satisfaction of being acquaint-

ed, with the little deference he had paid to their late indulgence, who had acquitted him upon such easy conditions: for that now, having added both a perjury, and contempt of their injunction, to the abjured repetition of his former offence; it was but reasonable, and she was not without hopes, that their next judgment would be attended with somewhat more severity.

It must have made an odd scene, to have beheld Dolly, and Manly, stretched on the same feather-bed, passing their hours in this and the like conversations; lying cheek by jole, labouring with the most opposite passions, and reflections; yet, keeping up the just decorum of the most perfect friends, reasoning, and disputing, free from heat, or discomposure: for Manly seemed as under some enchantment, within the reach of the object of his desires, but wanting a clasper to enfold her with; nor could he even roll himself round, towards her.

I can but think, how in his place, I should have cursed all such catterwauling projects; nor have dared, to have harboured the least idea of a petticoat, for ever after; for poor Manly was locked up, like a fly in a spider's web, so that he had nothing moveable about him, but his tongue, his eyes, and his fancy, and those but under the most dis-

mal prospects; and, as he told Dolly, had she fairly hanged him by the cord she had bound him to his good behaviour in, he had perished then contentedly, and in what he could not but have thought a glorious cause; but still to continue his being, under the dread of that future vengeance, which must await him from the company's sentence; and the pangs which must ever haunt him in publick, lest he should be known, and pointed at, for the mark of her derision, and practices; was more excruciating in the reflection, than the worst of deaths could be in the execution.

Had all the men on earth, he said, opined that his then project could have proved unsuccessful, he would have laughed at them for blockheads; nor would it have failed, had not his drouzy senses been locked up in slumber, when they should have been upon duty, which he could scarce conceive to be other, than preternatural.

He had rode, he said, near threescore miles that day, and had not been an hour from his horse's back, when he went to bed, which might incline him to sleepiness; but he had guarded so strictly against it, that he could have sworn, it would have been impossible for him to have forgotten himself. He cursed his fate, and earnestly

intreated Dolly to stab, or otherwise dispatch him ; for as what he was further reserved for was uncertain ; death, in any shape, would be more desirable than his present misery.

Though Dolly longed for the discovery of his contrivance, and of the actors in it ; for by his discourse it was plain, that more heads and hands than his own had projected, and participated in it ; yet her honour would not permit her to extract it upon such undertakings, as she meant not to perform ; so that she contented herself, in ignorance.

Morning appearing, Dolly arose from her feather-bed, locked her door, and went down stairs ; but when, by the day-light, she perceived what a forlorn place she had lain in, and how far detached from all others of the human race, she lifted up her heart to providence, in grateful praise for her deliverance ; for had she sounded a trumpet there, no ear could have heard her : but as this very place had been selected for her ruin, and to have prevented the approach of assistance to her, so it now as commodiously answered her purpose, in confining Manly's cries, from other ears than his own.

No sooner were they all met at breakfast in the morning, than after mutual compliments had passed, Dolly enquired of one, and then of another, whether they knew the young lady, who was her bedfellow the last night; when one said, she supposed her to have been an intimate of this lady, and another of that; till unable to find her acquaintance upon a separate search, Dolly put the question publickly to the whole company; but not a soul could give the least account of her; nor upon search, could she be found; or had any one seen her depart: but vanished she was, that was most certain.

They amused themselves with walking, and chit chat, till after dinner; when they agreed all to be in the field betimes, for that on so fine a day, it would be pleasanter abroad, than within doors. This point being settled, Dolly told them, that as the races would not begin, till long after they came there, it should be her part, in the interim, to entertain them with a new piece of diversion. Every one was inquisitive into what this should be; but Dolly begged to be excused, not doubting, she said, but it would prove very amusing.

She had ordered a cart in readiness, against the company should be moving, and staying

staying herself behind them; she carried two stout fellows up to Manly, and (having pinned a thin rag over his mouth hole, and laid her commands upon him not to make the least noise, or cry, upon pain of being uncase'd and flogged in the market place) ordered them to carry that bundle to the cart; then ordering the cart after the coaches to the course, herself followed him singly, having sent Mr. Gotham before in another conveyance. Upon the company's arrival in the field, all were inquisitive, what was become of Mrs. Gotham? she promised them some diversion, they said, but now they were all ready, in expectation of it, she alone was absent.

It was not long, before they spied her coach at a distance, creeping along, with a cart by the side of it; when they all made up to her, to see what was coming. She told them, that having by great good fortune found her poor bedfellow, unable to stand; yet desirous of seeing the races, she had hired a cart for that purpose; as also to shew them all, how far they had imposed upon her, by insisting that she was unknown to them; for that now, herself would bear witness to their mistake, she being perfectly well acquainted with most of them.

The

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 87

The whole company began to think that Dolly was a little out of her wits, being certain that they knew her not, and wondered what she had got bundled up in the cart: when growing impatient, they desired her to let them into the mystery; whereupon Dolly ordered the servants to cut the stitches, and to set her bedfellow at liberty.

Every eye was directed to this transaction, till the fellows had stript off the covering; when who should appear, but the wretched Manly, in his shirt; wrapt now, in dismay, many folds deeper than he had been in the bed clothes. Upon the sight of this object, such a shout issued, as rent the very air, and presently drew round them all the stragglers upon the whole course.

No sooner had Manly gained his feet, than he attempted his escape; but the surrounding multitude, as he approached either verge of the ring, plying him with their horse whips, drove him again to the center; nor were his old Nottingham friends, who had no doubt of his crime, his only tormentors; but even those, who had never yet had the least intimation of his delinquency: for it most frequently happens, that not the offence, so much as the humour of the populace, (which seldom
wants

wants excitations to penal exercises) proves most prejudicial, to the person singled out for suffering.

After some diversion (as they called it) this way, the company called upon Dolly, to explain how she had met with Manly ? and how, and by what means, he came to be bundled up in the condition he had appeared in ? when she imparted openly, the history of the last night's transactions ; signifying, that as they had heretofore sat in judgment upon him, and had transported him for life, for his offence at Nottingham ; she now took his return, in defiance of their sentence, for an high contempt of their authority, and that (passing by his ill designs against her) she had reserved him for their pleasure, and had therefore consigned him to their hands.

Upon hearing Dolly's charge, some particulars requiring to be cleared up, they began to put questions to Manly ; but so many of them speaking together, and all making separate demands, it bred such confusion, that no regular answer could be obtained ; till at length, having elected a president, all was submitted to him ; who after silence proclaimed, began his examination, properly.

I shall

Squire Gotham and Dolly Clod. 89

I shall not burden my reader with his several queries, and the responses ; let it suffice to say, Manly confessed, that soon after his return to London, still burning with love and rage against Dolly, and resolute, at the hazard of his life for obtaining his purpose ; he sent down a young woman, whom he kept, purposely to have a strict eye upon her, and also to inform him of every advantage, he might have but a possibility of gaining over her.

That receiving advice of her being at Loughborough, he took post from London ; when his spy, immediately on his arrival, having furnished him with so fair an occasion as Dolly had before mentioned to them, he was persuaded, that nothing could have intervened, between his wishes and their completion ; so that stripping for bed, and delivering his clothes to his spy, she went off post that night, and left her clothes by the bed-side for him ; who doubted not, but having once obtained his desires, he might have passed unknown in the womens apparel, and have enjoyed his mistress, during the remainder of her stay, with her own consent ; or had he found her still refractory, he would have gone off himself, before day-light the next morning.

Had

Had it not been for an irresistible heaviness from his fatigue; and for Dolly's so long tarry before she came to bed, he said, he had made no doubt but of perfecting his views; but being so insensibly born down with sleep, had been the cause of his then present calamity. He declared, that vile as his intentions were, and raging as his passion still remained, for Dolly, (little questioning but that her virtue was under superior guardianship) he would never more attempt it, though under the fairest opportunity imaginable; for that he now felt such an awe upon his faculties, but at the idea of her chastity, as would for ever check each rising motion, to her dishonour: then begging them to pardon his error for that once, he forswore all future attempts against her.

The company having gained this information; put it to the vote, by their president, what punishment they would adjudge him to; when several thinking he had already been sufficient sufferer, and must still have much to struggle with, before he would be in *statu quo* again; having nothing he could call his property, but his shirt, nor any cash to procure other covering, and many miles from home; they came, one and all, to a vote for turning him

him up to the wide world, as an incorrigible rascal, beneath their pity or regard; and now the company flocking in upon the course from all quarters, they opened one side of the circle, and gave him fair play for his life; but few with-holding their hands, from a cut, with their long whips as he passed them, at first setting off; that putting him upon his speed, instantly every eye in the field turning towards such an unusual sight, both horse and foot joined in the pursuit; amongst whom, were so many active hands, that he escaped not a most unmerciful flogging.

They pursued him quite to Loughborough; every one confessing, that Dolly had created them ten times the diversion, that the race itself could; for happy was the man, who could come in for a cut of the squire's posteriors; nor can it be supposed, but his courage was tolerably cooled by it, before he reached an asylum; for his shirt was one continued plane of blood, from his shoulder to his hams; nor was ever poor devil so mauled, in running the gantelope before.

The races ended, and the company returned to Loughborough; Dolly was congratulated upon her noble resolution, in bringing so audacious an offender to condign

dign punishment ; and, for her heroick constancy, and conduct through the whole affair ; every voice joining, in the loudest acclamations of her praise : but what became either of Manly, or his setter afterwards, was never known ; for he got off in the dead of the night, and was no more seen in that country.

C H A P. VII.

Death of Sir Rustick. Lady Dowager Gotham imprisoned. Mr. Ringwood undone. Mrs. Ringwood seeks relief from Scriven.

HAIL Dorothea ! while I tune my lays,
 (From sun-burnt homeliness of country Doll,
 Hence no more to be heard) to chaunt her ladyship :
 Nor Squire Dick, whom erst we gloried of,
 Shall more be found, but in the Baronet ;

For not three years had passed since their return from London, before Sir Rustick dying suddenly, and intestate ; his honour, with his estate, descended to Sir Richard, and his wife became a Lady Gotham.

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 93

No sooner had the news of his father's death reached Sir Richard, than he hastened to pay his duty, and condolence to the Lady Dowager, his mother; purposing an offer of all filial offices, and assistance in his power: but, contrary to his expectation, found the doors shut against him, and all access to her denied him.

Surprized at this treatment, he sent a message, to acquaint the Lady Dowager how ill he took it, to be denied paying his last regards, to the remains of a father so dear to him; that his intent was from motives of duty to herself, and from his sincere desire of being helpful to her, under her affliction, for so great a loss; but all was to no purpose, she would grant him no admission.

As for the estate, he was secure enough of that, having been wholly intailed upon him by his grandfather; so that his mother could only come in for her share of the personals. Now Sir Richard taking advice of some lawyer in the neighbourhood, was counseled to proceed roughly against her, by insisting upon a search into the personal estate; himself, and sisters having their several rights to it: but lady Gotham, prevailed with him to submit with patience, till he should see what his mother would do,
and

and whether, by degrees, her indignation would not abate towards them.

He dispatched a messenger to his brother Scriven, informing him of their loss, who with his lady, came over forthwith to Sir Richard's ; but were equally denied access to the lady dowager, notwithstanding their brother and sister Ringwood were admitted, and caressed by her, even to the degree of her privy-counsellors.

The burial proceeded, without the least invitation to Sir Richard, or Scriven ; but however, that hindered not their hiring two mourning coaches ; and meeting it at the church, (having both put themselves and families into mourning) they assisted at the interment.

The lady dowager administered to her husband ; and in a few weeks, having stript Ad-dlehall as clean as a scraped egg-shell, moved off with Ringwood, to his seat ; leaving Sir Richard a vast old house upon his hands to be provided for, of every necessary piece of furniture, and utensils ; nor could he get into it in less than a twelve-month, which it took up, to repair the damages she had done to it. Notwithstanding which, Sir Richard never once complained of her ill usage, or made any demand upon her, for his part of the personals.

Mr.

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 95

Mr. Scriven, having never received a penny with his wife, from her father in his life-time, could not but judge himself well intitled, to what would be coming to her, as a child's part, at his death; nor could he imagine it a duty, on him, not to demand it; so that (let his brother Gotham act as he pleased) he determined not to acquiesce under the loss, of what he esteemed must be considerable; for having made his demand; upon her ladyship's refusal to give him satisfaction, he commenced a suit against her, for an account of the Baronet's personal estate, and proceeded therein very vigorously.

Thus matters stood with the Gotham family, and had remained for about six years; when Mr. Gotham the uncle dying, Sir Richard was made his testamentary heir, both of his reals and personals, save some small legacies to his servants, and five thousand pounds to Dolly, for her separate use: so that Mr. Gotham's estate being about three thousand a year, Sir Richard had, all together, a good landed estate of eight thousand pounds a year, and upwards.

Sure never any two were more, (if equally so) happy in all the world, than Sir Richard and my lady; for Sir Richard having much more coming in annually than his expences

expences amounted to, though he lived in frugal plenty, he seldom laid up less than four or five thousand pounds a year; and his lady enjoyed her sole delight, consisting in works of munificence, and charity: for the noble donation her uncle had made her, gave her a vast field to expatiate in; nor could any woman employ it to better purposes.

She immediately made an addition to old Clod's income, of fifty pounds a year; she assisted her brothers and sisters, by enabling Spark to add another farm to his own; paying off all the grocer's demands; enlarging the milliner's stock, and setting up her three brothers in their respective callings. She distributed sums weekly in small charities, bestowing her favours with a more liberal hand, to poor declining shop-keepers, whose decays were not introduced by prodigality. In short, she became a publick benefit, not only to her nearer neighbours; but even more unknown, and remote parties, upon proper recommendation, seldom failed of her bounty.

While life was thus sliding on in plenty, and tranquillity with Sir Richard, and his lady, who rejoiced in nothing more than in a constant course of benefiting mankind, and that providence had endued them with abilities

abilities suitable to their inclinations. About the seventh year after Sir Rustick's death, Sir Richard received a letter, by a special messenger, from his brother Ringwood, (whom he had neither once seen or heard from, since his father's funeral) intreating the favour of him, to advance him twelve hundred pounds; for that all his goods were then under an execution for that sum, and without it, he must be undone. He begged his pardon for some former slights, and indecencies he might have been guilty of, and professed himself his affectionate brother.

This letter being delivered to Sir Richard, as his lady and he were regaling themselves in a most delightful grotto, in his garden, (designed for tempering the intense heat of the summer season,) and cooling themselves with fruits, and iced wines, struck Sir Richard with amazement, who changing countenance, her ladyship became very solicitous for the cause of it. Here, my dear, said he, (giving her the letter) read this. I know not what you will think of its contents; but it hath pierced me with immense disquiet.

Her ladyship having perused it; What is to be done in this case? Said he, how many pence would he have contributed to

me on a like occasion? I think they should have given me my own first, before they had requested extraordinaries; but give me your advice; what answer shall I return him?

My dear, said her ladyship, you have but small choice of words to frame your answer from; as they can but consist of a repulse, or a compliance: for as to invectives, they are my abomination. I own, said he, though they have treated us so basely; yet if that sum would save him, I could not suffer him to sink, for lack of it; but what security am I to have for it? I think, replied her ladyship, that is not now under consideration. The money is wanted instantly; that sum may save a man this week, which, six fold, may come too late, in the next. If you will provide the cash, do it honourably; seek not security. If he proves honest, and is able, he'll repay it; if not, of what use is your security?

Sir Richard then asked, what she would advise him to? My dear, replied she, were it wholly in my own choice, it would not be double the sum, should prevent a reconciliation from obtaining in your family; provided that would procure it.

I must

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 99

I must confess myself, through your affection for me, the unhappy instrument of the present subsisting difference; nor hath it caused me little pain, to see what small hopes there is of any alteration. You having made me happy, in myself, my parents, my circumstances; nothing remains to imbitter life so much, as to behold any one creature otherwise; nor should an human being be destitute, of whatever was in my power to create its felicity. The relation is your's; mine but by marriage; tho' I take myself for a remote relative, to all mankind; and being such, is of sufficient prevalency with me, to contribute to their relief.

This speech of her ladyship, to which Sir Richard listened with uncommon attention, was no sooner delivered, than his own servant was dispatched with the messenger, charged with bills for the money; together with a letter from Sir Richard, expressing his concern for the misfortune; and his hopes, that what he had sent, would arrive in time to be serviceable. He joined his wife, in the love and duty he tendered to the dowager lady, and them; and giving them all the kindest invitation to Addlehall, concluded.

Ringwood, had the honour to return Sir Richard his note for the money ; but withal, by letter, told him, that her ladyship and Mrs. Ringwood presuming, that what he had done was unknown to his wife, they begged to be excused from their compliments to her ; giving only their love and service to himself.

Sir Richard, having detained the servant till he had read the letter ; his indignation grew so turgid, that not informing his lady of his intent. he wrote by the bearer, the answer which I have here subjoined.

Brother Ringwood,

HOWever it may appear to you, nothing seems more surprising to me, or indicates either bad education, or bad principles, or both more, than a determinate conception of prejudice against faces, or persons, rather than against their morals, or actions. What hath lady Gotham done to incur the hatred of my mother and your house ? Nay rather, what hath she left undone that might merit their esteem ? She hath become my wife,—it is true ; and such an one, as I have every reason, with strictest justice, to boast of.—What was I, when I married her, more than she ? Or what had I still been, but for her ?—Was she ignorant ?

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 101

norant? So was I.—Was she poor? I was able to enrich her.—What were we all in our cradles, but animated lumps of flesh, without more good qualities than a dismembered limb, while motion remains in it?—And though some acquire a display of their faculties sooner than others, from divers contingencies; better late than never.—Before she was my wife, she was neither my mother's daughter, or your sister;—she is now both: and when you can match her, I shall say there are two accomplished women in nature;—till then, pardon me if I think there is no other;—at least, I am satisfied, that whoever bears malice, without the best of causes, is not so.

As to the matter of your letter, the money I sent you is owing to her mediation, who (far from returning indignities to the promoter of them) has declared, that was my mother's good will to be purchased, she should think it worthy of any price.—How amiable then, is that truly noble and generous spirit, which can quietly take wrong to itself, rather than prejudice another; compared to those, who will neither act right, or suffer injury? I leave you all, to the corroding pangs of your own reflections; while her ladyship and I, enjoy that tranquillity,

quillity, which only the heart void of ill will can harbour.

R. G.

This letter, though it never produced an answer, was handed about at Mr. Ringwood's, with all the contempt imaginable; nor was any invective sharp enough to hurl at Sir Richard, or his lady; for Ringwood's affairs being just patched up again, the family stomach was too sour to admit of any jilups; nor did Sir Richard hear, either good or bad from them, for almost two years afterwards.

Mr. Scriven had run to the full length of his law-suit, whereby he was decreed four thousand odd hundred pounds, which the dowager lady was to pay him, together with his cost; of which sum, after all the plague and trouble she had given him, he resolved not to abate her a penny, and therefore had lodged her safely in the fleet.

Ringwood's wife, in the mean time, was tormenting his very soul out, till he should procure her mother's release; for the old lady, upon going to live with him, had put all her effects into his management, which had enabled him to hold out so long; but that fund being exhausted, Mrs. Ringwood was come to a resolution, of parting with

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 103

with her jointure of eight hundred a year, towards her mother's discharge, and to secure the remainder for herself, they having no child.

Ringwood being now drove to the last extremity, and threatened by the dowager lady with an arrest for her money ; and his wife taking part with her mother ; never was an house so divided against itself as theirs ; the mother and daughter against him, and he against them : but it was hoped, that the sale of the jointured lands, which was the last stake in their hedge, would have somewhat composed matters again ; till Ringwood's writings coming to be over-hauled, that (which had been reserved as their sheet anchor, and on which their sole expectations depended) appeared to have been, for thirty years before, mortgaged for a very large sum ; which, together with the arrears of interest, for above twenty of them, had swallowed up every future hope from it ; for the heir of a West Indian coming over, and laying claim to the estate, or his money, that not being a fund for the whole, Ringwood's person was threatened for the remainder.

This unexpected evil, not only divested the lady dowager of all prospect of ever being freed from her confinement ; but Mrs.

Ringwood of all future subsistence ; and her husband no longer able to maintain his ground, had raked together what gleanings he could pick up, and gave out that he was going abroad, to one of the English plantations in America. The mortgagee entered on the estate, and turned Mrs. Ringwood out of possession ; nor would a single neighbour assist her with a groat, in remembrance of past miscarriages ; nor had her behaviour, wherever she had been, relative to her brother and sister Gotham, been one of the least crimes objected to her, even in the opinion of strangers ; for every one acknowledging how justly the calamity had befallen her, rather exulted, at her overthrow, than contributed to her assistance.

The poor lady being now driven to the last extremity, (so pernicious are the effects of pride) would willingly have submitted to Sir Richard for a morsel of bread, but was deterred from seeking it there, by the dread of a repulse ; her conscience now laying before her, the many most convincing reasons, he had to deny her. Past scenes recurred with horror to her mind ; her necessity was very grievous ; she had never injured her brother Scriven personally ; to whom then should she apply, but to him ?

She

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 105

She sat forwards, for a long and loanly walk, on those feet, which had scarce ever trod rougher than on a carpet, or a grass plot. She sat out, I say, on them, for the unbeaten tracks, and towering hills of Derbyshire, in as severe a frost, as had been felt for an age before ; but her hunger was still sharper than that, and die or travel, was the sole alternative she had ; nay, and that an excess of travel, for her wants would brook no delay.

Here much more happy is the rural swain,
Inur'd to hardships from his natal day ;
Knowing no more in life than what he feels,
His views are all confin'd, within that sphere.
He envies not the gilded chariot's swing,
The trim encasement of the scented beaux ;
But wrapt in heresy, on his pliant limbs,
Rejoices in the benefits of nature.

Alas Deborah ! how much better had
Dolly's birth become thy present state !

Thou hadst not then, labour'd with griefs
so piercing ;

Thou hadst proceeded by meer nature's aid,
Nor cast an eye towards thy pristine grandeur.

Thy sister, traversed those very wiles

With sturdy limb, nor grudg'd the toil-
some walk,

To shun thy mother's rage, and still prest on,
Tho' servitude attended at the goal.

How art thou shock'd then, at the very
tour,

Which she, a volunteer, e're came with
pleasure!

But sad reverse! her feet ascend the carr,
Whence thine are fallen, never more to
tread.

Through incessant labour, and miserable
perseverance, she at length reached port
Scriven.—Her hopes had hitherto supported
her; but now, a sudden damp seizing her
senses, surprized her very soul,

Left misconception, or her brother's frown,
Like some pestiferous blast, should fix upon
her.—

How should she combat with a rude
denial!—

Her heart would split, her spirit fly in air,
Her lifeless carcass drop upon the floor,
Should he reproach her, but with past mis-
conduct.

O! had she but been able to have sup-
ported nature by any other means, she
would

would still have returned, without applying to him ; but her ideas rose so thick, and fled so quickly, that she could resolve on nothing. What a wretched state are they reduced to, whose reflections must center in self-condemnation ! to providence, how can they fly ; that hath cast them into their calamity : to man they durst not fly ; self-conscious of their own ill deserving.

These, and the like cogitations, are what, having first distracted the heart, induce so many suicides ; for where that is inconscient of guilt, the eye may front the very heavens, without a blush, and gratefully return its praise for ripening blessings, or quietly submit to its severe decree ; and not placing it to its own score, but to a wiser guidance, with satisfaction, wait the event of things.

Resolution, founded on necessity, had now struck the knocker, and she was taken in ; where we will leave her, waiting the issue of an interview with her brother, and sister ; of which, we shall give an account in the ensuing chapter.

C H A P. VIII.

Her reception. Her reformation began. Is reconciled. Intends a visit to Sir Richard. Writes her submission to him.

MR. Scriven was an honest, but blunt, and well meaning man; for the occupation he followed, introducing him to a set of low lived, and almost masterless fellows, where good words, and soft speeches make but little impression; a constant roughness of dialect, and sternness of countenance, was from long habit, almost conjoined to his nature, and by an injudicious spectator, was beheld as such;

Scriven, I say, being possessed of no other motive of regard to Sir Rustick's family, since his death, than what meer respect for his wife obliged him to, (for as he was as good an husband as ever lived) and especially, retaining no esteem for either the dowager lady, or the Ringwoods: (under whose influence the old lady had been so troublesome to him) no sooner observed his sister Ringwood in very mean plight before him, than, what? said he, hath the old lady sent you with my money, she has withheld so long?

The

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 109

The haughtiness of Scriven's air, left her no room for a reply, till she had vented herself in a flood of tears; then falling on her knees before him; she endeavoured, all that in her power lay, to correct the wrinkles on his brow, by giving every thing a turn as favourable for herself as possible, and casting the blame on Mr. Ringwood's ancestors, and himself; on them, for receiving her fortune, and securing her by a sham equivalent, and on him, for launching into those extravagancies, which had not only devoured the remainder, but all other her father's fortune, which had come to her mother's hands; whereby, not only her ladyship was perishing in confinement; but herself dropping, by inches, for want of the least friendly support from any one.

What's all this to me? said Scriven; but, (I presume) to extract a subsistence for yourself, now you have rioted away the substance of two families? But Mrs. Ringwood, (for I shall no more call you sister, than your pride would ever permit you to stile me brother) answer me punctually; when Sir Rustick turned me and my wife out of his protection, without a shilling in our pockets, and that with your knowledge too, and approbation; what did your abundance minister to our necessities? You

knew our straits ; you beheld our distress with a dry eye, and an obdurate heart ; and why ? Because I was not rich ; but I was honest ; I was a man, my wife your sister, formed of the same materials, subject to the same passions, and infirmities, and capable of the same satisfactions as you are ; but I was not rich, I say, therefore, worthily was I to suffer. If then poverty be such an unpardonable crime as not to be excused ; for what ? But its being criminal in you to have relieved such unworthy creatures, could have with-held your hand from our assistance, or your tongue from the office of a mediator between us, and our offended parents ? Surely, I say, nothing but its being a criminal act ; and if so, Mrs. Ringwood, your own practice must be my guide, towards yourself, in like circumstances.

You have cast a sneer heretofore upon my meanness, it is now my turn to repay it ; you first set the example, and whatever I was benefited in my distresses, by your generosity, I am not only (through the blessing of providence) in capacity to return as your due ; but to augment it, in proportion to the manner in which you conveyed it to me.

Reflect

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 111

Reflect with yourself; you, who have looked so much above me, must certainly have acted upon a proper foundation; for you was rich; and how can the mighty err? Consider, I say, how you yourself in mine, behaved to me in your circumstances, and make your demand, what I shall do for you.

I would not have you, and such as you have been, imagine so impartially, as that your case requires assistance preferable to all the world in like fortune; I cannot take a circuit of five miles, but I meet with many a woman in as low life as you are, who neither condemn providence, or esteem their own cases the most desperate of all others; for even not the wretchedest of them, but
• would refuse to change sides with some one.

I am not against acts of charity; but that I may not be condemned in the disposition, would employ what I have to spare that way, on such, where some merit in the receiver, may redound to the credit of the bestower; and not cast my mite before the undeserving. I am apt to believe, now I have so freely opened my mind to you, that you have not any thing further to ask of me; or if you should, I must desire to be excused from according to it; but, as perhaps your journey may have been fatiguing

tinguing to you, and it may possibly be the last time your travels may ever tend this way ; my servants shall set a meal's meat before you, and here is a crown to bear your charges home again. This journey might have been taken in your coach, at far more ease to yourself heretofore, had it been designed in regard to my wife or me, and perhaps might have paved the way for a kinder reception now ; but I must confess myself under no obligation for the present trip, when the visit was solely for your own sake.

Having thus said, Scriven could no longer bear the room ; his heart was rackt at the sense of her sorrow ; nor could he have backed his argument, had he waited her reply ; so turning upon his heel, he left her ; and repairing to his wife, gave her an account of his proceedings.

I am sorry to say it, but truth must come out, fall it where it will ; nor will I smother the general observation, that womens prejudices are not so easily removed, as those of the other sex ; especially, in matters arising from slight, and disregard to their own persons ; and this, prevented Mrs. Scriven from receiving the tidings of her sister's condition, with so much concern as her husband bore on the occasion ; who had

had even put a force upon nature, in declaring the undisguised truth to her: for Mrs. Scriven, upon her descent into the parlour, not only assumed, but really exulted with, an air of superiority over her sister. She found her overwhelmed with a deluge of tears, drawn forth, by the unkind treatment (as she called it) of her brother Scriven; but sister, said she to Mrs. Scriven, it cannot but pierce your heart, to see so near a relation, struggling with such difficulties, as I am overborn with.

Truly sister, said Mrs. Scriven, the fault is your own; pray what compunction felt you for Mr. Scriven, and myself in your own case? Your husband having embezzled all the fortune mine could claim as my due, can never prove a reason for our supporting you, after such a loss. I would advise you to go back to my brother Gotham; tell him your tale, he is the head of the family, and the properest person to keep you.

My sorrows, said Mrs. Ringwood, are insufferable; could I ever have expected this usage from a sister? You should have taken care, not to have deserved it; sister, said she. I am a woman as well as you, and a child of the same parents; but as no regard has been shewn by you to me, when I wanted your help, you must now expect

a return. I have a visit upon my hands this afternoon, my chariot is at the door, and I must leave you ; but my advice is, to make the best of your way to Addle-hall..

The shock Mrs. Ringwood had received, from this coarse behaviour both of Scriven and his wife, was inconceivable ; but that of her sister, was far the acutest. A servant had placed some cold victuals before her ; but though she wanted not room to contain it ; yet her heart, and every faculty was so embittered, that she had not the least relish for it. She was now melted even at the very soul ; and could, pleasurably, have poured forth her whole being in streams of weeping. On her coolly reflecting with herself, she could not disallow of her brother Scriven's arguments, even those parts, which rendered her most culpable ; but still, her soul was set upon some redress, and she still hoped, he would have compassion of her.

To be dismissed from hence, said she, on my return, the same long tedious way that I travelled hither ; my feet swollen, my shoes torn, so small a matter in my pocket, to purchase a lodging, or refreshment, is terrible to reflect on. I can but die ; come then ; thou welcome end of all my woes ; when nature's spent, how happily shall I meet my exit.

Why

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 115

Why should I require an extension of that being, which can but be prolonged in misery! O! that my fate had placed me in original obscurity, where nought possessing, I had known no want; but elevate to every worldly joy, my fall, precipitate, quite overwhelms me.

Whilst Mrs. Ringwood was thus bemoaning herself, in comes Mr. Scriven. Have you had sufficient, Mrs. Ringwood? said he. I have, dear brother, said she, I have; but my grief has deprived me of its enjoyment; nor can I truly relish, what seems but to protract my state of wretchedness. I am too full already to admit of more. The speech you left me with, like subtlest lightning, has pierced my very soul, nor shall I ever dislodge it. You have shewn me the genuine picture of myself, in my true colours; wherein, I find the shades so strong, as to have absorbed the little beauty that remained in it. You have, (though with justice I must own,) given me so mean a conceit of my own behaviour, that I confess myself all deformity, all one continued blot, a sink of darkness, wherein no spark of brightness can be traced.

O dearest brother! repeat my sullied character; give me again, and again my own pourtrait? Methinks, so glad I am to have
found

found myself, that I indulge over even my own depravity ; for I must consider what has befallen me, not as the work of chance, but of a justly recompensing providence. My error, though of long subsistence, is but one continued crime ; and surely, a single fault is not unpardonable : but by usage, and custom, wrought into my very nature, the strongest catharticks must be applied to discharge it thence ; nor shall it ever enter more. I here disclaim it, and view the reverse with greedy pleasure. No whit, beyond my meanest fellow creature, would I ever more esteem myself, were I mistress of the globe ; but blended in my natural class of beings, remain full of benignity to all mankind ; with high, and low, with rich, and poor at amity ; neglect no opportunity of doing a good turn, because the object might be below my regard ; or strain a point, to ingratiate myself to the most exalted ; but with an even hand, list every man my friend.

Sister, said Mr. Scriven, for now I will call you so ; if what I have uttered as a blunt truth, hath imprest itself for reformation, I may boast of a pupil, I shall glory to preserve ; and could you but persevere in this way of thinking, not myself only, but all mankind would have an interest in you ; nor should
you

you want for what my hand could grant, while such sentiments prevailed with you.

I could be profuse, and lavish to the noble soul, that makes the universal benefit his aim; then rising, and saluting her, he first bid her welcome to his house, offered her his protection, and assured her of a donation at her departure. As for the crown he had given her, he acknowledged that it shamed him; but as every distemper was to be encountered by its contraries, he judged a thorough humiliation, was the surest foundation to build a lasting change upon, which he hoped would be the consequence of it.

Mrs. Scriven tarrying out pretty late that evening; Mrs. Ringwood and he supped together, in the most engaging familiarity; which ended, she being exceedingly fatigued, was retired to bed before her sister's return; but Scriven taking occasion to declare to her Mrs. Ringwood's reformation, desired her to treat her sister the next morning with the same respect, as if she had never misbehaved; and accordingly, when the two sisters met next day, they saluting each other, Mrs. Ringwood found her circumstances prodigiously altered; and perceiving the difference so agreeable, she ever after, became one of the most human creatures breathing.

Mrs.

Mrs. Ringwood tarried near six months with Scriven, till growing uneasy at the trouble she gave him, and longing to be reconciled also to her brother and sister Gotham, she purposed to take leave; but after living so long at ease, and not being under the same necessity, as first impelled her thither, she was somewhat nonplust, how to get to Addlehall, till Mr. Scriven offered her his chariot and four to Derby; from whence, she might meet with many conveyances to Nottinghamshire. Then making her a present of an hundred guineas, they parted perfect friends.

When Mrs. Ringwood arrived at Derby, she was told it would be three days, before she could be accommodated to her liking; so that returning her brother Scriven's chariot, she waited at the inn for her departure; but having full time before her for reflection, she considered, how abrupt her appearance at Sir Richard's would seem, without some previous notice, after what had passed between them; so that she hired a messenger, whom she charged with a letter to the knight, introductory to her attendance upon him; or at least, should she receive a repulse, she rather chose it in writing, than by word of mouth.

I shall

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 119

I shall from the records of the family, transcribe the very letter itself, for my reader's satisfaction.

Dear Brother,

IF you shall receive this, in the same good part as I write it, how happy shall I esteem myself. I need not declare, that if to have erred is irremissable, I must for ever remain hopeless of your's, and my sister's favour; but if to have seen, to have detested, to have corrected it, is available for forgiveness; surely, I have merited it.

Think not, dear brother, that my present Indigence hath compelled me to make a sacrifice of my still mentally retained opinions, and that I temporize only for external prospects; for though I admit my misfortunes to have first enlightened my mind, with the truly worthy beams of benevolence, to yourself, my sister, and all mankind; yet the cordial affection I now view you both with, proceeds from an improvement of my judgment upon those misfortunes, wherein no one is more capable of condemning what is past, than I myself am.

How happy shall I esteem myself under my difficulties, if any sufferings of mine, can absolutely have effected, what in prosperity,

perity, I should have made my least concern? And how gracious hath that providence been to me, who out of an evil, which no one could have dreaded more than myself, hath extracted that good, which will for ever prove my standing comfort.

I am now fully convinced of the vanity, of what I heretofore esteemed my glory; nor would I traffick away the sweet enjoyment of an universal complaisance, where-with I now abound, for ten times the grandeur my past station had advanced me to, under the shackles of that pride, which then enslaved me.

If it is possible (and I cannot, in my present disposition, but flatter myself, that hearts so like my own, thus rectified, are capable of every human impression) forgive a recanting sister, and with your accustomed lenity, admit me, at your own and my sister's feet, to wash off the stains of my past conduct, which have cast such a blemish on my character; for believe me, brother, that next to heaven itself, making my peace with you and my injured sister, will convey the most gladsome transports to my breast.

Give me but leave to wait upon you both, my heart will be at rest; when having vented my compunction personally, behave
to

to me as your own prudence shall direct; I will never complain, though rejected from your presence, ever after. I am now at Derby, as the bearer will inform you, where, if I am worthy of a gracious answer, I shall ever acknowledge it, beyond the merit of your once most injurious sister.

D. R.

This letter was delivered to Sir Richard, at his first rising in the morning, the messenger having travelled all night with it; nor stayed he to make his own reflections upon it, before he returned with it to her ladyship's bed-side. They both attended carefully to every syllable of it; the same ideas of it arose in each of their minds; and in silent musing, each face bespread itself with tears.

At length, can your ladyship, said Sir Richard, overlook my sister's foible, and permit her to visit you? The scene is altered with her, and possibly her wants have cast her upon the necessity of this application, in hopes of our future regard. I admit, said her ladyship, that it may be, and most probably is, so; but, as it may be otherwise, and where there is but a bare possibility of accepting an assertion in a pure light, we ought not to disfigure it with ob-

VOL. II. G scurity,

scurity, or a wrong construction ; I am of opinion for admitting her, without the least hesitation ; though while they were in arms against us, we could not regard them in the affectionate manner, as was incumbent on so near relations. As for any worldly gain to ourselves by a reconciliation, that is wholly out of the question ; we have no interest in it, whatever she may ; but if contributing to her assistance, can reduce her to reason, and to return us but the fruits of gratitude, and amity ; I, for my peace sake, exclusive of every other consideration, (though I doubt not a blessing attending it) should counsel you to receive her.

Sir Richard replied, that her ladyship had copied his sentiments to an hair, and that he would write her an immediate invitation. She thanked him ; but added she, if you will indulge me still a single word more, I would divert that purpose. It's possible, that notwithstanding your letter should run over with compliments, my sister's affairs, may at best render her suspicious, that we may receive her superciliously : I say, persons in her case, are apt to judge so. Now, you must know, my ambition hath ever been, to avoid giving pain to the afflicted, nor would I suffer them, but the torture of a mistrust, that I should

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 123

should slight them ; which may sometimes, I own (by endeavouring to conceal their disgraceful circumstances even from themselves) have ran me into the contrary extreme ; but I had much rather be a sufferer by my over good will, than reserve. I say, therefore, that she may not travel under the panick of an unwelcome reception ; suppose we should take the coach ourselves, and fetch her ; meet her gratefully, so as neither to deject her by our concern, or by over-acting our joy upon the occasion, put her to the blush ; not dropping the least hint, either of her present condition, or the past divisions between us, and so conduct her home with us.

Sir Richard chiming in with his lady, they detained the messenger till the next morning, when themselves set forwards to meet their sister.

C H A P. IX.

Sir Richard's reconciliation with Mrs. Ringwood. Letter from lady dowager. Mrs. Ringwood's answer. Lady Gotham's generous offer. A conference thereon.

ALL things being prepared over night, they were stirring betimes for Derby, where they arrived about the close of the evening.

Mrs. Ringwood, who had some time expected the return of her courier, was wearing away her time under the utmost anxiety, for the issue of her letter, at one of the inn-windows above stairs; when a cloud of dust, and the rattle of a coach at a distance, moving towards her, roused her from her reverie, to observe who it should be. Upon their approach, she fancied, she saw her brother's livery: but when they whirled round, with a violent clatter, into the inn-yard, she was confirmed, that it must be him; and feared, that her letter might not have found him at home, and that her message had been to no purpose.

She stepped, however, for satisfaction, to a back-window, which commanded the yard, where she saw Sir Richard, handing his lady

dy from the coach. She should not have the power, the thought, of making herself known to them there, and was terrifying herself at the unluckiness of the disappointment; when she heard him enquire, whether such a lady as Mrs. Ringwood had lodged there for some days past.

She was now convinced, that they must become upon her account, and was making her best way down to meet them, when she perceived they were ascending to her; but surely, the frowns, or smiles of fortune are as discoverable by the face, as the pocket.

Mrs. Ringwood's heart beat, her colour fluctuated, nor could she draw the least conclusion from the adventure, what would prove the event of it; but yet, from the cheerfulness of both their aspects, she would fain presage her future happiness.

Her brother, at the head of the stairs, embraced, and kissed her, as did her ladyship, and complimented her for the entrance of the room, as if she had been the first peeress of the land; but at length, preceded her; Mrs. Ringwood alledging, that her occupancy of it for some days, had invested her with a prior right, for stiling it her apartment.

Sir Richard and his lady were for carrying away the discourse to distant subjects;

but Mrs. Ringwood's heart being brim full of her own affairs, under some hesitation, asked if her brother had not received her letter? He replied, it was that, and the delight her ladyship and he had conceived at it, which brought them thither, lest it should be a difficulty to her, to meet with a suitable conveyance cross the country; and with her leave, they would take her back in the coach with them.

Mrs. Ringwood, to whose ears this reply sounded most musically, asked, whether after the misconduct she had been guilty of, they were not surprized at her application to them? To which her ladyship replied, that as the word might be applied to different purposes, she owned the letter had surprized them, into such affectionate sensations for her, that the least expression of them was, paying their personal compliments to her; where they hoped their countenances would prove more significant of their satisfaction, than any words they could have returned in writing would have expressed.

Mrs. Ringwood wept, and would have proceeded to the exposure of her past actions; but her ladyship replied, that the most ungrateful thing she could do to them would be, recalling scenes utterly buried in obli-

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 127

oblivion ; for she hoped, that for the time to come, only brotherly love and unity would concur with all their behaviour, on both sides ; and that, such as might contribute to their several felicities.

Thus old scores being at one dash cancelled, after spending their evening agreeably together, they all returned the next day to Addlehall ; where the baronet and his lady, paid all the respect to Mrs. Ringwood, or even more, than the best of sisters could well have claimed from the most loving of brothers, and her ladyship and she were soon sworn sisters.

About three months after this good understanding had subsisted between them, Sir Richard received a letter from his mother, dated from her chamber in the Fleet-prison, in the words following.

Son Gotham,

YOU can't pretend ignorance of what every body knows ; and that your brother Ringwood's affairs have turned out to my ruin ; and how I have been served by that mean fellow Scriven, who has cast me in goal these twelve months.

Had you been possessed of the common tenderness of a son, I had not been exposed to all this ignominy ; but I suppose, that

low bred creature your wife, (I shall spit at the name of ladyship) can't yet stomach your paying that duty to me, which you owe by nature. I hear you can cherish her coarse parents into gentle folks, while an own mother may rot, for what you care. The least you could have done, had been to have paid off that fellow, which might still be done, if Doll Clod would give you leave; if not, my body must be his reward; for I shall soon leave it here. I am fallen in my flesh to an otomy, and my legs only have gained a growth, since I have been here. I have no stomach, which I don't repine at, having nothing to eat, or money to buy with; and if nobody else will discharge me, the warden must; for I can't long remain above ground: so you may do as you please, or as your wife (as you call her) will let you, I can't help it. You may tell my daughter Ringwood, who I hear is with you, that I am glad she is so well off; but I wish it had been out of the company of that ensnaring creature Doll, who has had the artifice of the devil, or she could not have had every bodies good word thus; from your miserable mother.

D. G.

P.S.

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 129

P. S. Direct for me, N^o 6, three pair of stairs, in the Fleet.—If I don't pay my arrears of chamber rent in fourteen days, I shall be turned over to the common side.—Pray pay the postage.

It is not to be conceived, what confusion this letter bred in Sir Richard's family; he took such disgust at it, that though he protested, no man on earth would have more pleasurably assisted a parent than himself; yet, the abuses it was stuffed with, in prejudice to his wife, he could not excuse: and as he had never desired other favour from his mother, than a peaceable acquiescence with his marriage; unless she was satisfied in that, and reconciled to his lady, he would neither advance a shilling towards her rent, or apply for her discharge, though he was sure she was dying by piece meal; this he declared publickly, before his lady and Mrs. Ringwood, to whom he also shewed the letter.

The women were in tears; they intreated but for the rent, to prevent her going over to the common side, till he should better consider of it; but he was inexorable; he valued his lady, he said, beyond all things; and that as she had deserved every thing at his hands, no one who regarded not her as

himself, should receive any benefit from him : that no man on earth had a title to the favours of heaven, till conviction of his errors, and amendment ; and that unless her ladyship would acknowledge such conviction of her's, and remain in charity towards his wife, and her family, he should judge himself guilty of joining in her failings, by assisting her ; as it would but be a means of continuing her in her obstinacy.

They had for some days aimed at mollifying Sir Richard's unusual rigour, without the least effect ; when my lady was so moved at the thoughts of the dowager's approaching fate, that she told her sister Ringwood, if she would write to her mother, she would give her fifty pounds, so that Mrs. Ringwood would dispatch it as from herself ; for it was apparent, the old lady bore such inveteracy against her ladyship, that but to know it was her gift, might frustrate her view in sending it. She knew not what her mother's lodging rent would amount to, she said, but was in hopes, that sum would be sufficient to prevent her removal ; and wished, that the acuteness of her mother's distress, would but influence her to moderate her spleen, against a person so wholly devoted to her service

service as she was. She desired Mrs. Ringwood, as one means of allaying her warmth, to acquaint her of Sir Richard's resolves; and withal, her own belief, that upon her mother's acquiescence to the marriage, Sir Richard might be induced to release her.

Mrs. Ringwood would have been more surprized at the gentleness of her ladyship's disposition, had not such various testimonies of an angelick nature in her, daily discovered themselves; but she undertook the service most willingly, and wrote to her the following letter.

MADAM,

YOUR ladyship's to my brother, dated from a place whose very name conveys an idea of horror to the senses, I should have thought might have favoured less of acrimony; especially to a most worthy son, whose indulgence had you thereby sought, I am persuaded he would have prided himself, in accommodating you to your best wishes; but who hath too much just sense, joined to an affection of the best of husbands, to commiserate a relentless mother, against so deserving a woman as my sister Gotham really is; one day spent in whose society, I have experienced, to have enlightened me with more benevolent principles, than the whole

course of my marriage in my own, or your ladyship's family.

Your ladyship must excuse me, what flows from a grateful sense of mere justice to my sister's merit; though it may not perfectly accord to your own sentiments; nor can I conceive, but that one week's union with her, divested of all former imbibed prejudices, would enable, and even enforce your ladyship (as better qualified) to afford her higher encomiums, than my capacity can extend to; yet all within the limits of her real deserving.

Can your ladyship now imagine, after every means ineffectually experimented by myself, and her, to induce Sir Richard to send you the bare chamber rent, which you receive herewith, that she herself should have advanced it, out of her own purse, from the legacy my uncle left her? and that unknown to my brother too, (and under her orders not to be revealed to yourself) that you might not be turned out of your chamber? Could any but an heart fraught to excess with generosity, have voluntarily offered, what she might with so much reason have refused, to your abusive treatment of her? but madam, this instance of her bounty, is no more a rarity, than a swallow at Midsummer, as myself
am

am a flagrant monument of; nor can I name the person in distress, within the extent of her communications, who has not, in some shape, tasted her munificence.

Why? in opposition to the general voice of mankind then, will you persist to vilify, what alone is truly valuable? and not rather, by a timely engaging her to friend, participate of that goodness, she so liberally dispenses to strangers? methinks, you should rather glory in establishing an interest in her, whom every one esteems; which once proving the case, I am assured you would be paid a filial deference by both, and be as welcome to Addlehall, as when yourself was mistress of it.

Were she far less worthy than she is; nay, were she what your imagination paints her; if you studied your son's peace, which solely subsists in her, why should you contribute your endeavours to contract his felicity, by your upbraidings, when the venom only returns upon your own spirits, without materially affecting him.

I hope this will relieve your immediate wants, nor doubt I but my brother's humanity, excited by my sister's pressing instances, would wholly disengage you from your present melancholy situation, could you but sincerely demonstrate, that you
wish

with them as well as I am sure, they do you. I beg your answer, to your reformed daughter.

D. R.

Mrs. Ringwood having undertaken the management of the whole affair, dispatched a servant, with both the letter and money; giving him express orders to deliver both into her ladyship's own hands, and to wait her pleasure for an answer; which in due time he returned with, and was as follows:

Daughter Ringwood,

HA D it been only reported to me, that you had been born down the current of that base creature's enchantments; I, of all women living, had discredited it; but what can I think, to see it under your own hand; and that, in such colours as might adorn a cherubim?

Is it possible you can have been so misled by partiality? Or have you been hired for a subsistence, to belye your conscience, in the glaring idol you have erected for my son's wife? That it can be her real resemblance, I am sure is false; nor am I to be deluded by so gross an imposition.

Has the hypocrite persuaded you, that the money you sent me came from her bounty?

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 135

bounty? Blush at your own weakness, while I ascribe it to my son, its author, whom she has persuaded, by her arts, to father it upon her; for I am well assured, in my own mind, that not a finger of her's would wag, to divert a razor from my throat, could she by that only prevent it.

You child, may truckle, and humble yourself to such vermin for bread; but let me tell you, the blood of the Braine's, runs undeservedly in those veins, which would not rather stagnate to petrification, than condescend to the gleanings of such earth born reptiles. O! how lordly would she carry it, had she me in your servile dependance! but thy mother, will never be caught worshipping such earthen deities.

Pray thank my son, in my name, for the favour he sent me; out of which I shall purchase me a coffin; or should not his aid befriend me, I may still be conveyed to the ground naked; for long I cannot hold out here. Your loving mother till that time.

D. G.

How amiable are the paths of virtue and gentleness, when set in contrast with degeneracy and moroseness! what pains did the old lady take to render her own and children's lives miserable; when she might, in

lieu thereof, have instituted a lasting tranquillity between both, could she have prevailed on herself, to have shewn the least relaxation of her implacable hatred, to lady Gotham!

Well! her answer arrived; but so far contrary to Mrs. Ringwood's hopes, that she could willingly have stifled it from the knowledge of her sister; but for fear of incurring her displeasure, and being suspected of a confederacy with her mother, still in her heart; so that with watery eyes, she produced it, to her ladyship; to whom, for her mother's sake, she made numberless apologies; as of her age, her affliction, the way she had been bred in, the sourness of her temper, through confinement, and what not..

Lady Gotham replied, that she took all the palliations she had made in exceeding good part, being what one christian ought to do for another, whom she could not but suspect to be erroneous in her judgment, and confessed she should have done the same, had the case been her own. Her ladyship seriously asked her, what she thought of her going to town, carrying the money, and releasing her mother; and at the same time begging her forgiveness, and abiding her censure? Whether she did not
imagine,

imagine, that might work her mother's temper into more mildness; for she declared, there was no prospect so grievous to her imagination, as that of protracting an inharmonious life, with her husband's relations.

Mrs. Ringwood was so thoroughly moved with her ladyship's condescension; that, no sister, said she, that shall never be done by my consent, though for my own mother: you have submitted far enough in intention; nay, in the late fifty pounds; and if my mother determines to be blind, both to your kindness, and her own interest, let her carry her rancour to the grave with her; my vote shall ever be against demeaning yourself, by obtruding ungrateful favours upon her. I will once more give her my sentiments, and if they prove ineffectual, I shall ever after desert a cause, which hath so little probability of success. Give me leave to use my own sense of things, as I find myself inclined, at the time of writing; and then never more will I fruitlessly employ my pen in the service.

Her ladyship urged, that deep rooted prejudices, and of long standing, required arduous labour to grub up; that it had been a maxim with her, never to harbour any; or if once she found them sprouting,
by

by obliging herself to wave them, she had hitherto preserved that equality in her judgment of all men, as not to doubt, but the person who had once injured her, would one time or other repent it ; and then, she had ever a reserve of forgiveness : for as she was liable to error with others, where it lay on her side, she could not rest till she had rectified it.

C H A P. X.

Lady Dowager's release from the Fleet.

I Know not how the reader will take it, who undoubtedly has expected no less than a copy, or extract at least, of Mrs. Ringwood's whole artillery, collected into one battery for her mother's final conviction ; or for ever after, had promised to hold her peace : but herein we are defective ; for after the most exact scrutiny, no such thing hath been discovered. Now whether she kept not the foul draught, or whether she made any ; or whether the old lady in her general dearth of all things, had applied the original to some unnameable purposes, is uncertain ; but so it is, that it hath never appeared : yet under such
a dis-

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 139

a disappointment, there still arises hope, that a tolerable master of arts may as certainly find it out, or the true purport of it, as he would the contents of a bill, by perusing the answer to it; so that with this hint, we shall forthwith proceed to the old lady's itself, in the following words:

Daughter Ringwood,

UPON a cursory perusal of your letter, I own, I imagined you had spent much time to very little purpose; in alluding to gentlewoman-like actions, from a person of the base birth, your sister, (as you call her) is; till upon a second more interesting perusal, I must have condemned your senses to too gross a degree, had I wholly discredited you; nay, I will not say, but I must accord with you, and willingly would, could it but be possible, for my own faculties, to discover a tythe of those graces, virtues, and excellencies in my son's wife, which you have so minutely particularized; nay, I could, and would adore her, and receive her as my son himself; for you can't think it to be a pleasure to me, to live at enmity thus with my own child.—I know not how it is, but while I am writing this, methinks I could wish it was so; and have thought over the circumstances of the fifty pounds,

pounds, from the receipt of which I have drawn so much comfort; till were I certain that your account was genuine, I should be induced to conquer my prejudices in her disfavour: but child, don't impose upon me; it will answer no purpose; yet, if all is true as you represent it, I could fly to the bosom of (I will upon your credit call her) my daughter-in-law, and should gladly close my eyes in her arms, if I thought that her heart was but seriously indulgent to me.

My age requires me to banish animosities, and to make my peace with my children before my exit, which I begin to long to do: but daughter Ringwood, take care you don't presume to play upon my infirmities, lest you should draw down your mother's curse upon your head. Let me know then, what I may with certainty depend upon. I would be friends, but not be fooled; as you know my mind, deliver, or not, my love to my children.

D. G.

What a world of misunderstanding might be prevented, could but the heart be laid as bare as the countenance; but from the frequency of distempers in that, under the most gracious prognosticks of this, what little

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 141

the credit can mankind implicitly afford each other : whence arise jealousies misgrounded, doubts unnecessary, surmises injurious, and every evil detrimental to human society. Now had the dowager lady not gone upon trust to her own invention, for the disposition of her daughter-in-law, how happy might she long since have been, in the amiable qualities, of one of the compleatest of her sex ; the most dutiful wife, the most indulgent parent, the most valuable acquaintance, and the sincerest friend ?

Mrs. Ringwood receiving the above letter from the old lady, in her ladyship's presence, could neither (with good manners) withdraw, or avoid opening it before her ; but had no sooner cast a look upon the first lines, than by her colour flushing into her face, and her eyes being ready to run over, lady Gotham could read, in the change of her countenance, its contents, she thought, as in a reflecting mirror ; nor could she refrain from compassionating the sorrow Mrs. Ringwood was thereby affected with ; but before she could recollect herself for reflection, the scene brightened, and Mrs. Ringwood's looks clearing, more and more, even to a pleasurable smile ; her ladyship, though sensible of some alteration, could not fathom what it tended

to, till her sister putting the letter into her own hands, begged her to read it; hoping there would be no cause for secreting it, though she owned, she had but too much reason, at first, for wishing she could have done it.

Her ladyship had no better an opinion of some of the former part of it than her sister had; but declaring, when she had perused it through, that the latter part made ample amends for every thing preceding it; she carried it to Sir Richard, to whom, with infinite pleasure, she read it over, begging him to gratify her, in his mother's discharge; for that she should not enjoy an easy moment till she was at liberty. Sir Richard replied, that he left the whole management of the affair to her, and whatever she did, should be complied with by him, to a tittle.

Her ladyship was not one of those, who choose to appear of consequence by the number of their dependants, or procrastination of their suits; but having ever been of opinion, that a benefit granted with ease, was as good as twice obtained; furnishing herself with all requisites, she gained Sir Richard's consent, for a few days absence of herself, and sister; who both took coach for London directly.

Mrs

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 143

Mrs. Ringwood was for sending the old lady an account of their coming ; but her ladyship contradicted that, inclining rather, to come upon her at unawares ; and accordingly, the next morning after they reached London, they set out, as Mrs. Ringwood suspected, for the Fleet ; but her ladyship, whose head had been at work during the whole journey, upon the guidance of the affair in the most becoming manner ; being fully persuaded, that to discharge her acceptably, though by the delay of a day, would be more agreeable to her mother, than an immediate act in a slovenly manner, took coach to her sister the grocer's wife ; where alighting, she gained her husband's recommendation of a lawyer, whom she sent for, and desired her sister, to help her to genteel lodgings.

As to this, her sister hoped, she would think of no other than her house, where was room enough ; but her ladyship was too full of punctilio to accept it ; assuring her, she had her reasons ; therefore sent her sister Smother in quest of others, while herself should wait for the lawyer.

Here, her ladyship had the pleasure to be confirmed, in the sincerity of Mrs. Ringwood's former professions ; by herself, offering to go with Mrs. Smith, (that being the
name

name of the grocer) upon the enquiry ; for had she retained the least shadow of her prior haughtiness, she would never have proposed, of her own accord, to have accompanied her ; and indeed, it was on that account, that her ladyship would not accept of Smith's lodgings, lest it might displease the old lady, who might have taken it for an exposure of her, in her distress, to the Clod family, whom of all other, she hitherto the most abhorred.

She opened her request to the lawyer, how she might procure her mother's release, without putting her to any trouble, or inconvenience about it ; who presently informed her, that it might be known at the prison, what she was charged with, which, and some small demands of the goal being satisfied, she would be set at liberty of course. She then desired he would inform himself of all necessary particulars that day, and meet her, at her new lodgings, which Mrs. Smith would inform him off, by ten o'clock next morning.

Having settled this affair, and a lodging being provided, they lay in it the same night ; and the lawyer having made his report in the morning, they went to the Fleet, paid the debt, and every required due ; and then, having dismissed the lawyer with
a gra-

a gratuity, they were conducted to the old lady's chamber, by one of her fellow prisoners.

She was but just stirring, and under very little of the appearance of a lady. She was hanging over an handful of fire, spooning some thin water gruel in an earthen pipkin. Her daughter Ringwood entered first, who at sight of her mother, in that condition, was very near fainting away ; but giving vent to the struggles of her heart by weeping, that kept her on her legs, till having craved the old lady's blessing ; she informed her, that her daughter Gotham was at the door, waiting her permission to come in.

The old lady's colour came, and she rounded about for an excuse, for her dishabille ; when Mrs. Ringwood, perceiving where the thing stuck ; Madam, said she, believe me, you know not yet that lady's worth ; your dress, any dress, no dress is the same to her ; your hand she would kiss, and your heart she covets, were you upon a dunghill. Your judgment, madam, added she, will soon make a stricter inquiry into her breast ; when take my word for it, the more you know, the more you must admire her.

Come, come then, said the old lady, bring her in, daughter Ringwood, bring her in.

Her ladyship had scarce passed the threshold, e're she was on her knees; then seizing the old lady's hand, and wetting it with her tears, she intreated her pardon for all her past offences, implored her future favour, and engaged, for ever to deserve it.

Her mother, now viewing her in another light than she had done, wept heartily over her; raised her up, and kissed her. Daughter, said she, heaven's grant that the good report I have heard of you, and more, if more can be, may prove true! nay, if your character given me by my daughter Ringwood is not fabulous, I have undeservedly rejected you for some years; which, as it has been my fault, hath also proved my misfortune, in having been so long deprived of the enjoyment, of what had been my supreamest comfort.

I am sorry to be seen by you for the first time, pleasurably, in so dismal a place as this, and heaven only knows, whether ever my scene may change; but whatever proves my lot, I shall henceforth pray for your's, and my son's prosperity, equally with my own.

Her ladyship, scarce able to speak for tears, acknowledged the horror of the place, and expressed great sorrow, at her having

having been so long there ; but assured her, she should never see it more, if she was able to defend her from it.

She told her, that her dinner was appointed early that day ; that if she had any things she peculiarly valued, she would assist her in packing them up ; but as for the refuse, desired she would give herself no trouble about that, but leave it to some one, who had at any time been useful to her, and might possibly want it.

Dear child ! said the old lady, your good will hurries you beyond your judgment : it is not saying come with me, that will free me from this restraint ; here are bars, and gates, and grates, and turnkeys, child, to be passed first ; here is near five thousand pounds to be paid, before I can dine with you, any where but in my dungeon : a great price, for a few years freedom ! for by course of nature, I have not many to come.

Dear madam, said her ladyship, slip on your things, and go with us ; we came not up to invite you, till we had unlocked every door, and stopt every mouth, that can from henceforth detain, or molest you.

What is it you mean ? said the old lady. Daughter Ringwood, what means my daughter Gotham ? she is uninformed of the

method of this wretched place, having led a life of purity, void of all fear of it.

Madam, replied Mrs. Ringwood, my sister is very right in what she hath alledged; for every penny that can detain you, she hath discharged, and your ladyship may pass these barriers, with the same freedom as ourselves.

What do I hear? said the old lady. Can this be possible? am I once more to breathe the air of liberty? once more to revisit my native country? embrace my children? and am I at length to lay my bones by my ancestors? but pray, whose doing is all this? to whom am I to be indebted for this blessing?

Madam, said Mrs. Ringwood, no sooner arrived your ladyship's last letter of reconciliation to my brother, and sister; than her ladyship wild for your relief, took upon herself the management of the whole affair: and for prevention of those delays, so frequent amongst the men of law, (who neither acting in their own cases, or feeling the sufferings of the interested parties, calmly proceed amidst a crowd of dangers) set out for London, to put the finishing hand to it herself; being then only in her proper vocation, when any act of beneficence is to be performed. She has pursued her own methods;

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 149

thods ; and those, I trust, by the speediest means imaginable ; at least, I am witness to your discharge, and you are now at your option to depart this place, when, and as your ladyship pleases.

I beg you, madam, said lady Gotham, to prepare for your remove ; I have provided lodgings suitable for you, where every present want shall be supplied ; so, cast not a straggling thought after what will be left behind you.

I know not how, replied the old lady, to distrust the truth of what I hear ; yet move I but as in a dream : however, I will attend you both. Then taking only the clothes on her back, she descended the stairs, to the outer gate, where her heart strangely misgave her, that she should meet with some interruption ; for the pleasure she had conceived at the thoughts of her departure, seemed too exalted to prove real ; and she was ready to sink, when her daughter demanded passage through the wicket ; but all opening without the least molestation, she joyfully whipped through it, and stepped into the coach.

She had scarce seated herself, before she attempted to have returned due compliments to her loving children ; but the soul, that seat of joy, was so agitated through a mul-

tiplicity of convulsing reflections, as entirely to obstruct her vital faculties, and she sunk down on the seat of the coach, to all appearance, lifeless.

The two ladies were immensely surprized at this accident, it happening so incommodiously, as in the coach, and in the street too; however, Mrs. Ringwood shifting sides, and laying the old lady's head in her bosom, supported her from bruising against the coach; while her ladyship, being prepared with a smelling bottle, rather than make a disturbance where they were, applied that, and such other means as the place would admit of, so effectually, that before they reached their lodging, she was able to sustain herself upright, and was returning to vigour again.

They had no sooner conducted the old lady into the parlour, than her ladyship sent for a surgeon to bleed her mother; and having privately hinted at her condition, and what had been her situation for some time; advised with him, upon her case, and how she was to be managed, upon her so suddain re-admission, to a free and wholesome air again, and better living than she had there enjoyed? He assured her, she had acted with great prudence in giving him that account; for that nothing was more

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 151

more frequent than a fit of illness, after such a change ; and gave her instructions, both as to what diet and exercise her ladyship ought, for some time, to familiarize herself to ; then having bled her, and ordered her a draught immediately, her ladyship recovered apace, and was soon out of danger.

C H A P. XI.

Continuation of their affairs in town. Journey to Addleball. Meeting of the old lady and Scriven. Engage a company of strollers.

BEING all so agreeably settled together in their new apartment, her ladyship sent for mercers, linnen drapers, lace women, mantua makers ; and, in short, for so many different operators, in their several professions, that their house was like a fair, from morning to night, in order to rig her mother out in perfect elegance ; leaving the direction of every thing to her own choice ; and at the same time intreating her, to be so free, as not to postpone whatever she might have a fancy for, by reason of the price ; for that her ladyship's gratification consisting wholly in her pleasure, that which heightened her enjoyment,

H 4

ment, would prove most satisfactory to her ladyship.

It was at least a month, before all the purchases could be manufactured into wearable commodities ; but so many of each as were absolutely necessary for the present, were expedited by such express orders, that in a week's time, the old lady was properly apparelled, for appearing in the coach, at church, and upon some visits to a few of her ladyship's former acquaintance, who were still in being.

The old lady, under the proper regimen the surgeon had prescribed for her health, began to be renewed both in her former habit, and complexion ; and for the first time that she had ever been there, was introduced to the front box at the playhouse, at which she was so excessively delighted, that it proved their diversion for many evenings while they staid in town ; but her ladyship observing on the first night, that her mother had been as free in her behaviour there as at Addlehall, and as vociferous, upon certain occasions, which more than others had engaged her attention ; applied to her, by Mrs. Ringwood, for tutoring her into a little more reserve ; the audience having had as much diversion with her, as they had received from the performance

formance itself ; but a word to the wife quieted all, and she behaved with consummate decency for the future ; till the time coming for their departure, it was not without heavy regret, that she quitted the pleasures of the town : but they having now made a six weeks tour of it, it was high time for the ladies to revisit Addlehall.

In a word, the lady dowager was so affected with the easy behaviour of her daughter-in-law ; and, on account of that duty, regard, and deference which flowed from her ladyship, even more naturally than from her own children ; that e'er they reached Addlehall, not one of her own bore competition, in her esteem, with her ladyship ; she was scarce ever easy, when she was out of her sight ; or was any thing done to please, of which lady Gotham was not the transactor.

Sir Richard received her with the affection of the most obedient son ; and no situation could be more felicitous, than that of the dowager lady, who now beheld a numerous race of grand-children, with the most sensible delight and satisfaction ; inso-much as she was never better pleased, than when surrounded by a circle of them.

They had not been settled many days, before Sir Richard sent his brother Scriven

word, that her ladyship, his mother, was with him; and that his money lay in the warden's hand for him, upon demand; and that he should always be glad to see him, and his sister, whenever their affairs should call them into Nottinghamshire.

Scriven, upon whom cash was daily rolling in, returned no other answer, than that he purposed a visit to him very shortly; and accordingly, in about fourteen days, his wife and he came over.

The lady dowager, on news of his arrival, had some struggle with herself about seeing them; but consulting thereon with lady Gotham, without whose advice, she scarce ever stirred a foot on any purpose whatsoever; and setting the enjoyment she had had of her self since her reconciliation with her, and her son Gotham, against her disquiet during her state of enmity with them; she resolved to wave all past injuries, and to receive Scriven, and his wife also into her affection, in case they sought it; or if not, the blame would be shifted from herself, and lie at their door.

With this purpose, under her ladyship's patronage, she descended to them, and in the most placid manner, saluted them both; who not expecting such a reception from her, were so confounded at it, (having be-
fore

fore stored themselves with a flux of spirits, for repelling the fury they imagined they should have been accosted with) that they dropt upon their knees for her blessing; which she gave them in so tender a manner, that Scriven himself was at a loss what to return for the indulgence; nor did she once open her lips, for the whole day, in regard to any thing that was past, but behaved equally sociable and respectful to them, as to the rest of her children present.

The second day, after breakfast, Sir Richard took occasion to ask his brother Scriven, whether he had as yet received his money from the warden. No, brother, said he, I have not; nor ever shall I, nor had I ever demanded it, could I but have imagined, that my mother and I should ever have met upon so agreeable a footing as at present. Madam, said he, to the lady dowager, I have no children; am amply provided for already; nor, (had not your late way of thinking, in regard to me, made it necessary to seek justice,) had any dispute ever arisen between us, for that, or a larger sum; but this one act of your benevolence to us, hath, in my breast, cancelled all prior animosity; and as what my brother was so dutiful to disburse, is no ways wanted by me, if he desires not a return of

it, I shall most heartily present you with it. I am sensible of your straits, and will cheerfully contribute, not only that, but hereafter, if occasion shall require, whatever in my sphere, may conduce to your future benefit.

The scene now grew so moving, that the fund of affection which was equally distributed amongst the whole relationship, set them all into tears; till her ladyship, the dowager, broke silence. Son, said she, this instance of your generosity to a ruined mother, is more than I can well sustain, in whom center my acknowledgments for my present liberty, the enjoyment of my children, of myself, of all that the earth can bestow upon me, (and that, by a transition as marvellous as suddain) but in that most excellent of all beings in this world, whom I shall ever glory to stile my daughter? What then, can I ever repay her, for all her benefits to my body, my mind, and to the well being of my very soul too; and for all that shall ever fortunately befall me, both here and hereafter? For she alone, hath induced that change upon my nature, so truly laudable.

Henceforth, my dear children, added her ladyship, take the advice of a mother, (experimentally enabled to give it you) ne-

ver to receive a prejudice, from motives arising from your own conclusions only, till after failure of repeated trials; nor ever reject a repentant offender: in doing that, you may deprive yourselves of the most valuable of all blessings; and take my word for this, that the conviction preceding repentance, will leave little room for a future crime, of a like nature.

Having all been so pleasurably dull for some time; and Sir Richard, freely resigning his claim on the money to her ladyship; they were diverted from the further pursuit of their subject, by a loaded cart passing through the park, with a trumpeter in front, and a small regiment of party coloured gentry, surrounding it; whose hootings to each other, even rivalled the shrillness of the instrument.

The windows overlooking this procession were crowded; and the oddity of the appearance, soon caused a servant to be dispatched for intelligence, of whom, and what they consisted, as also the intent of their present march.

The servant returned with answer, that they were a company of comedians, and that the cart was loaded with their scenes, machines, and ornamental decorations. That they had enquired who was the magistrate
in

in that place; and upon his replying that his master was, they had made an halt, and deputed some of their members, to beg leave for exhibiting their performances in the town.

Mrs. Scriven declared, that if they acted during her stay, she would certainly go see them; and Mrs. Ringwood fell upon her brother, to beg him not to dismiss the poor people from his parish roughly, but to give them a chance for their bread; when the lady dowager joined her in the request, declaring, she had never received better divertisement in her life, than in seeing these sort of plays, while at London, with her daughter Gotham.

Her ladyship, whose chief delight consisted in conferring obligations upon others, observing them all to be so desirous for the amusement, proposed the inviting the players in; and my dear, said she to Sir Richard, as we are all here met together, and no one knows when we shall ever be so happy again; pray let us make ourselves as joyous as possible on the occasion, by letting them first shew to us, before they settle elsewhere.

Her ladyship's voice was as an oracle to Sir Richard; so that ordering them all into the yard, bag and baggage, he sent for his

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 139

his steward, to know where room could be most commodiously made for their theatrical exercises; he replying, that the great barn was cleared out against harvest, that was appropriated to the diversion; then having put them into possession of their quarters, a swinging buttock of beef was, by her ladyship's order, set on for their supper, they having engaged to be ready with their scenery, by the next evening; and one end of the barn (at their request) being furnished with clean straw, they thereon took up their lodging for that night.

Little was now discoursed of, but the ensuing play; but then, they were of themselves so few in number, that the theatre would make no show without a larger audience; so that several of the near neighbouring gentry were invited to it, and amongst the rest, the lady dowager insisted upon Mr. Clod, and his wife as part.

How it had happened I know not, for she had never seen them since her return; but as it was her ladyship's motion to call them in, lady Gotham resolved to invite them, nor did she at all repent it; for if the old lady was considerably sunk in her demand of respect from others, the Clods had as much advanced in their capacities for bestowing it properly; so that at their
meet-

meeting, no people were ever more politely or lovingly received, by each other.

The play began early after dinner, that the company might have time to sup before their return, and was acted with general applause. During supper time, many compliments being paid to her ladyship, by all the visitors in turn, for the advantages the whole country had received from her benefactions; Mr. Scriven said, that the reports of her ladyship's good deeds, being so extensive, it would be the greatest pleasure imaginable to him, to see all the persons who had partaken of her liberality, collected at their play next night; adding, that it would give him the notion of a large family, with the bounteous mother at the head of them.

One of the waiters catching at this hint, reported it in the kitchen, amongst the visitors servants; and they spreading it about at their return, that her ladyship desired it to be so, it passing instantly from hand to hand round the parish, such a train of people arrived in the park, about four o'clock next day, that the family expected they should have been besieged, or that it had been some extraordinary funeral procession. It being a fine day, most of them ran to the gate to see it pass, and learn the intent of
it;

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 161

it ; but to their no small wonder, the march was directed to Addlehall ; where making an halt, after infinite scrapes and congees to the family ; upon being asked whitherto their perambulation tended, they replied, to see the play her ladyship had been so good to invite them to. I invite you, good people ? said her ladyship. Yes, good my lady, said they, we have all participated of your good ladyship's charity.

Mr. Scriven asking, if it was possible for her ladyship's favours to have been diffused to so many of them ? many ? replied one of them ; why here is nothing, to what there might have been of us, in case there had been but a day or two's notice more ; for we heard of it, most of us, but this morning, or the several parishes in all the counties round us, would have furnished out ten times our number.

Good people, said her ladyship, I am heartily sorry you should have been thus imposed upon ; believe me, I gave out no such thing, nor did I in the least expect you here ; it is some designing person, who has not only put a deceit upon you, but abused me too ; well, now you are here, go round to the yard, and drink all of you ; but don't think, I would have sent you so unlikely a message.

I am

I am sure, an't please your ladyship, said one of them, you paid for the cure of my wife's broken leg, heaven bless you, or she must have been in her grave before now. Ay, said another, and her honour clothed my three children, when they had scarce a thread to keep the frost out; but she will be rewarded for it. Said a third, if her ladyship had not paid my rent, after a long illness in my family, I had been turned upon the parish long ago. Ay, said a fourth, if my poor gaffer had not been tended, and nourished like a sucking child, at her ladyship's expence, in his small-pox, when he was so bad, I had been a widow, and four as fine babes had been lost to the world (though I say it) as ever the sun shone on.

In short, the hurly burly grew so great, of every one testifying their obligations to her ladyship, that up came Sir Richard, to enquire into the confusion; when Scriven telling him the whole story, and that he guessed, it took its rise from what he had dropt at the table last night; Well, said the baronet, and what says my lady to it? O! replied he, my good sister hath ordered them all to the yard, for a draught of drink before they return, having expressed her sorrow at their disappointment.

No,

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 163

No, by my troth, said Sir Richard, that shall not happen to 'em neither; the barn is big enough, nor shall they lose their labour, now they are here; I'd have every mother's child of them come in, were there twice as many; then turning to my lady, Dolly, said he, these are your own guest, pray bid them welcome to the play; never let our neighbours have it to say, that we kept the actors to ourselves; but as they are come so far for thy sake, prithee let 'em all come in.

There was the best accommodation made for them, that the shortness of the time would allow of; nor did the family in the least repent their generosity: for the clamorous remarks, laughing, and shouting of the country folks, upon every turn, at the players, proved the best part of the entertainment: but what raised an universal laugh in the politer part of the audience was; where a beau in the play, had been laying close siege to a clever country lass; and having just gained her compliance, as he was taking her under his arm to move off with her, a good motherly woman from behind, could no longer restrain her indignation, crying, poor young creature!—that dog of a fellow will debauch her, as sure as I set here!—a villain, to use an innocent thing so!

so!—but, when the girl's supposed mother (happening to spy 'em together) was speeding to her daughter's rescue, and the beau ran quite away with her, she could no longer contain herself; but John!—John, lord, John (said she, to her husband at her elbow) how like a lout the fellow stands—why don't you run and help the old woman?—that rogue of a fellow will ravish the girl—run,—run—why don't some of you help there? nor would she be satisfied that it would not prove true (having raised such a confusion, that the actors could no ways proceed) till they had sent both the mother and daughter upon the stage by themselves, to assure the audience there was no harm done, but all was fair, and above-board.

Her ladyship, very much disliking the report which had brought this night's audience, lest her neighbours should think themselves, any of them, neglected, and excepted from the sight, by an invitation to a particular set of persons only; gave that day a general invitation to all that would come; but a computation being made, there was not half the company that had met the day before, nor was there near as many more to be numbered in the parish.

After

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 165

After breakfast the next day, her ladyship took her company down to the barn, to view how the actors had adjusted their lodgings, and fixed their machinery; where they were most agreeably entertained, with the method they had proceeded by, in regard to their lodging; for upon a large area of straw, there were at least nine pair of sheets spread, with bedclothes upon them, all as neatly disposed in rows, three or four in a row, as if they had lain upon feather beds; but as there were no sort of partitions between them, the ladies were under some difficulty for those of their own sex, how they could dress and undress, in so much company; when not being able to reconcile it to themselves, they called one of the female actors to assist at the debate; and from her, learnt that they never went to bed till it was dark, and always without a candle; so that each knowing the situation of their own territory, they could not be over-looked by any one; and then in the morning, the women either dressed before day-light, or lay till all the men were gone, when they arose also.

Are you all married folks, said Mrs. Ringwood? Most of them, she replied, were mated. Her ladyship adding, that she should think nothing so easy, as
to

to mistake one the other's bed in the dark; the young actress blushing, confessed, that it was not impossible, but that now and then, one might chance to stumble upon a wrong bedfellow; but that if they took care to rise early, she had never known any one charged with it: for it was a general rule, when once a bed was full, no one, in the dark, had any right to enquire who occupied it.

They chose not to scrutinize the affair too minutely; for if they had, it must have appeared, that free liberty of conscience, was the most prevalent principle amongst them: so they dropt the discourse.

To conclude, the actors were entertained for a week, at Sir Richard's expence, and at their departure, handsomely presented; but the whole country round having satisfied their curiosity, they judged improper to fix their station again in that neighbourhood, so set forward upon a more distant rout: and after about ten days stay of Scriven and his wife, Sir Richard's family subsided to its usual standard again.

C H A P. XII.

Two lovers hanged in one string. Relieved by lady Gotham, and rewarded by her humanity.

SIR Richard, and his house, had not long enjoyed the most profound tranquillity they were settled in, before an accident, as surprising as uncommon, happened, which put them into a vehement consternation.

Her ladyship, after she had left breeding, which ceased with her in the thirteenth year of her marriage state; had fallen into a mighty fancy for gardening, and employed a large portion of her time in that exercise. She had ordered a pretty green-house to be erected, wherein she had collected, and bestowed great numbers of exotick plants, which she constantly attended, and wholly managed herself. One night, in the beginning of September, the weather proving very warm and gloomy, she had purposely left open her green-house windows, for the benefit of her plantation; but awaking next morning before day-light, and hearing the wind very boisterous, (for she looked as sharp after that, as an insurer) she became
I all

all pain, and concern for her nursery, lest they should receive some injury from it, and arose, in order to secure them.

There was a shelf just within the garden door, which she had appropriated for her pruning knife, nor ever failed she of carrying it into the garden with her, whenever she went to her labour; now (though there could not be the least prospect of its being useful to her at this time) she could not however omit it, but insensibly laid hand upon it, and took it with her.

By the time she had got to the green-house, some few streaky fore-runners of morning appeared, and she had a small glimmering of light, so that she had the curiosity before she shut all up, to see if her plantation had been injured, by the severity of the storm, which still blew to a perfect hurricane; but had no sooner turned about to her right, than the most shocking sight presented to her, that ever her eyes beheld, of a man and woman, (but who they were she knew not) both hanging by the neck, behind the door of the green-house.

Her terror at this spectacle, is not to be conceived; being neither able to fly, or call for help, her joints trembled, and her knees smote so together; but her ladyship, enjoying as reasonable a share of spirits as
most

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 169

most folks, and rousing up her resolution, she applied the pruning knife in her hand to the cord, without more ado, and down they both dropt; for now she observed, that their necks were both inclosed in the same string. The man fell with his face towards the ground; but the face of the woman, who had fallen upon him, lying upwards, the increasing day-light disclosed in it that of a young creature, whom her ladyship, about twelve months before, had taken into her service, (being the daughter of a poor neighbour, over-burthened with charge) to be an assistant to her dairy-maid, and for other odd jobs, as a supernumerary in the family.

What should her ladyship do? should she raise the servants? or should she minister help (if yet it could avail) by herself? she was so divided in her opinion, that she could not readily determine; but trembling so still, that she could scarce sustain herself; she sat down for a moment in the window, to recollect herself how to behave.

While with great tenderness, and concern, she viewed the poor girl; she thought, that she perceived her lips to move a little, which first induced her to try, whether she was still warm or not; when the touch-satisfying her, that she was far from a clay-

cold corpse, she began to conceive hopes of restoring her. Rubbing therefore her forehead, and temples, she raised her upright against her knees, and holding up her head to give her freedom of respiration, she chafed her breast with her hand, till she heard her plainly sigh, and perceived her arm to raise itself a little; when imagining there might be hopes of her, she sat her upright behind the door, in a corner, to prevent her falling, and applied herself to the poor man; upon turning of whom face upwards, she discovered the carter's boy, (as they called him) a pretty lad, of about nineteen years of age; the girl herself being about eighteen.

Her ladyship, perceiving him to be rather the best of the two, for he began to breathe pretty freely; as it might be a considerable time before either of them should recover sufficiently for walking, she stepped in, and raising the servants, ordered the maids to carry Sally (for that was the name of the maiden) in, undress, and place her in a warm bed; and then gave the men servants the like orders, as to Samuel; (that being the lad's name) but as yet, she had not declared the cause of their disorder to any one.

She

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 171

She then sent for a barber surgeon near at hand, and had them both blooded; and by this, and other necessary precautions, and by nice management and attendance, before night, they were both in a fair way of doing well; but both their throats were so bruised by the cord, that it was with the utmost difficulty, they were able to swallow even whey, or the least liquid.

Her ladyship declared the story to Sir Richard, her mother, and sister, with the manner she found them in, and all that she had applied for their relief; when so surprising a thing it seemed to them, that they could possibly assign no cause to such a catastrophe; had either of them committed so rash an act singly, they said, it would not have been improbable, but love might have occasioned it; nay, had they severally committed it, that might have been ascribed to the one, for the loss of the other; but that two people should thus combine to die together in one cord, what less would it be attributed to, than downright madness?

Various were their conjectures, for three whole days, (it being so long, before either of her ladyship's patients were able to pronounce a word; though each, at times, had laboured hard to compass it) but on the

fourth morning, her ladyship taking her rounds, and visiting Sally first, she had no sooner undrawn the curtains, and asked how she did, than the girl starting up an end in her bed, replied, by another question, of what was become of Sam? Her ladyship asked, what she had to do with Sam? and again demanded, how she did? but the poor girl, whose heart was too full for cross questions, hung still upon her point, how it went with Sam? O madam! dear madam! said she, let me know how it fares with him, for so it must with me, whether in life or death.

Her ladyship, being very anxious for a discovery of the mystery between Sam and her, and perceiving her speech to be perfectly returned, sat down upon the bed by her. Sally, said she, if you will promise punctually to inform me, by a faithful relation of your inducement to so tragical an action as you and Sam had joined in, I will truly satisfy you, what is become of him. O good dear madam! said she, is he living or dead? I shall say nothing more, replied her ladyship, till you have given me an answer. O madam! said Sally, say but he is alive, I will answer every thing, if you will promise not to be angry with me.

Her

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 173

Her ladyship, finding Sally so importunate, was not able longer to detain her in a suspense, which she observed to be so afflicting to her; but replied, that Sam was living; when the girl caught her lady by the hand, and with eyes darting fire, cried out, O! now I will tell you all, madam, I will tell you all.

I hope, madam, you will not be angry; but poor Sam has been my sweet-heart, almost ever since I have been with your ladyship; and dear madam, he loves me as his own soul. I must confess, madam, I had no dislike to him; nay, indeed madam, the truth is, that finding him so hearty and sincere, my love was equal to his own, and I gave my consent to be his wife: but would have had him postpone it for some years longer, till having both saved something in our service, we should have a small matter to begin withal; for my dread was, (and so I told him) having an house full of children, hungry, and crying about me, for what I should not be able to supply them with.

Poor dear Sam heard me, it is true, but all that I could urge, would not abate his intreaties for my becoming his wife immediately. I told him, that while our children could be maintained at the breast, I

should not value their number, though they should draw me into the grave ; but what would become of them from that time, till they should be able to provide for themselves, it even distracted me to reflect on.

We had often stolen whole nights together upon this subject, but neither would he grant me time, or could I consent to instant matrimony ; when on that fatal night, he led me the back way into the garden, and to screen me from the weather, proposed our retiring into your ladyship's green-house.

After much argument pro and con, and numberless caresses ; Sam perceiving me inflexible, ~~he drew the deadly string from his~~ pocket, and raising himself in the window, fixed it upon a hook in the cieling ; at the same time declaring, that a million of deaths were more eligible to him, than a longer life without me. I cannot bear the thought, said he, that while we are delaying thus, some other, richer lover perhaps than me, may interpose, and deprive me of all that is worth living for ; and unless you will comply, by engaging within one week to become my wife, I will never more stir alive out of this house, but hang myself in the cord I have now fixed here.

What

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 175

What could your ladyship, or any other woman have done, in such a case? to have suffered the man one adored to have been his own executioner, what heart but must have bled itself dry, at the thoughts of it? and that in one's own sight too; there was no enduring it: but then to have untwisted all the scheme I had framed in my own mind, of a protraction, till better prepared for coming together, was a task too dangerous, as I imagined, to have entered upon; when he still persisting, I told him, that as I was sure we should both repent marrying, so soon as he desired; both to prevent his importunities, and my denials, and to demonstrate that it was not the want of affection for him, (which he had alledged to be the cause) and that I would never be the wife of any other man; though I could not heartily concur with his measures one way, I would another; and if he was resolved upon hanging, I would hang with him, with all my soul; for that I could never survive the loss of him.

She said, they discoursed that point over, till very near morning; having at length, perfectly resolved every difficulty, into their mutual advantage; when both having ascended the window, they with tears in their eyes, kissed each other; then with

intrepid resolution, said she, we joined our heads side by side in the same noose, and having fixed the slip knot just behind, between them both, clasping each other's middle, with one hand, we swang from the window; after which, I can give no further account of either of us; for I knew not but I was dead, till I found myself awaking in bed here, as from a dream: but upon a cooler influx of my senses, I became persuaded, that I had been brought hither by some one, whose charity had contributed to my preservation, before I was quite dead.

You may imagine, madam, added she, from what has passed, how acute must have been my anguish, when being sensible, and seeing your ladyship, and the servants about me, and perfectly knowing you all, I could not frame my throat to sound the name of Sam, or ask how he did, and whether he was alive or no; and, as in all such cases, the tender heart is apt to surmise the worst; so my persuasion was, that Sam had been too far gone to have recovered, and perhaps was buried by that time; which, had it proved the case, I was determined in my own mind to have followed him.

Her ladyship, than whose heart none was more susceptible of the power of virtuous love, heard

heard this story with the highest sense of compassion ; for there was somewhat so heroic in the fact itself, (exclusive of the crime) as she was astonished at ; nor had she ever indulged over such noble, real sentiments before. She therefore determined with herself, that such an instance of disinterested affection, should never glide unregarded by her ; but thought to postpone any declaration of her mind, till some future opportunity ; when again reflecting, that disburthening herself to Sally at present, might mitigate the anxiety her breast laboured with, from the fear, perhaps, of their both being dismissed from their service, and being reduced to wretched circumstances than before, which dread must necessarily retard her cure ; the generous disposition of her ladyship, (which could not permit that pain to others, which herself could heal, or prevent,) would not suffer her to delay Sally's happiness for a day, which she was certain she could instantly administer : so that in order, previously, to discover whether or no any lewd act had passed between them ; Sally, said she, answer me truly. You say, Sam and you have spent many whole nights together ; not in bed, I hope : though indeed, I cannot see how whole nights should be

passed, without some sort of criminal correspondence between you. I hope that has not been the case; but confess ingenuously to me, it shall be the better for you. Criminal? between us two? madam, said Sally, no, no, that was a thing impossible, for either of us but to have conceived in fancy, much less to have proposed, either to other. Why? dear madam, we loved like mother and child, brother and sister; but only as far beyond them, as your ladyship can imagine it to be possible; nor ever could we have acted otherwise, till we had been married.

This free confession, having contented her ladyship; she tutored her upon her distrust in providence, for her future provision, and that of her children, upon a legal and laudable marriage; and then having stated the horridness of the crime of self-murder, arising from any discontent of her own; her ladyship told her, to be of good comfort; for that their extraordinary passion for each other, having found a passage to her heart, even to sympathizing with their distress, she would no longer suffer such sincerity of affection to remain ungratified, but would thenceforth be a friend to them both; for that so soon as they were both recovered, they should be married,
and

and that herself would bestow an hundred pounds upon them; which, if judiciously disposed of, and with proper consideration, would be an ample sum for them to begin upon; nor should their care and industry, want even further encouragement from her, as they should deserve it.

If poor Sally's spirits were confused before, how were they now upon the gallop, at the inspiration of such a flux of felicity! her lady could scarce retain her in her bed; she should rave, she said, nor would it be possible for her to survive it, unless she had liberty to apprise that dear soul Samuel of it. O! she was upon the rack, to reflect on those cruciating chimeras his brain would abound with, till he could see, or hear from her; all which, if any judgment was to be formed from her own condition, must procrastinate his cure.

Her ladyship ordered her to compose herself, and that (as she was just then going to visit Sam) she would make him perfectly easy; but this, or ought else her lady could say or do, would scarce reduce Sally to temper again.

Her ladyship next proceeded to Sam, who though not fully arrived to the use of his speech, could make signs perfectly significant, in answer to what he heard. Her

ladyship asked him several questions, relative to Sally's narration, to all which he assented, by signs, and was overjoyed to hear she was living, and likely to do well; but when his lady had declared, that she had engaged her to marry him, so soon as both their healths were reinstated; the extasy with which the poor fellow received it, burst the fetters of his tongue, and he cried aloud, that he was now as well as ever, and would have risen, to have compleated the ceremony instantly.

Her ladyship checked his over eagerness, adding, that if he expected her protection, he should indulge himself only with the prospect of its approach, and consummation in proper time, of which she then gave him her assurance; and not torture himself at a small delay, whereby he might cast himself down again, and render her care of him ineffectual.

Sam engaging to obey his lady, and to pursue her advice in every thing, she left him; but without hinting at a word of the hundred pounds, lest she should anticipate that delight she doubted not but Sally would abound with, at being the messenger of such a piece of news herself; for her ladyship's pleasures arising from the joy of others; having settled Sam's peace by promising

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 181

missing him Sally in marriage, she conceived more satisfaction from the indulging of Sally, than could have accrued to her, from the softest expressions of Sam's gratitude to herself.

After breakfast, as they were all sitting together, none of the servants being present; her ladyship, in giving an account of her patients, recounted the short history of their amours, as she told them, she had it from Sally's own mouth, with the occasion of their melancholy disaster, in all its circumstances; which proved so moving, that one after another, they severally slunk out of the room, to find a proper retreat to weep in, they were so affected by the relation; so that her ladyship had scarce ended, before she found herself destitute of a single auditor; and they all severally confessed afterwards, that they were so far from being able to have replied to her, that it was with the extreamest difficulty they were capable of sitting out her narrative, so long as they did.

No sooner were our lovers about again, than her ladyship sent for them both before her; when Sam, upon his knees declared the just sense they had, not only of her saving both their lives, but of what his Sally had informed him her ladyship still in her
good-

goodness intended them : and as he had promised to pursue her ladyship's directions in the affair, he begged to know, when she would be pleased that they should marry ? Her ladyship replied, that if Sally had no objection, it should be the next morning ; that their wedding should be kept at her house, and both should enjoy their places, till they had considered how better to dispose of themselves, when she would be as good as her word to them.

Silence, on Sally's side, declared consent ; and as they had but slender preparations to make, they were soon ready ; her ladyship, her mother, and sister, each contributing several valuable things to the new married pair : but Sally wanted no bush to set off her perfections, being an exceeding pretty girl.

The marriage was had, and the servants all elegantly feasted, together with many of the bride and bridegroom's friends and relations ; and the evening producing a dance, never were creatures more merry, till the bride with-drawing, and the bridegroom soon following, the old proverb was verified, that hanging, and marriage, both go by destiny.

C H A P. XIII.

Sir Richard returned to parliament. Mr. Ringwood's death. Journey to parliament. Find an infant on the road. Mrs. Ringwood on point of marriage. Meets her husband.

NOT only Sir Richard himself, but all his family were by this time fully sensible, that the Gothams had never made such a figure in life, as since their conjunction with the Clods; for that same baronet, who of himself, and by himself, might have lived to the age of Methuselah unnoticed, in Addlehall; nor more conversable than the mansion he inhabited, was now sounded forth, even to remote regions, not only as a compleat gentleman, but as the best of husbands, fathers, magistrates, masters, and friends; and worthily drawn out as a pattern, imitable only, by the best of men: infomuch, that the election for knights of the shire in parliament approaching for his county, though two vigorous competitors had started up, whose cash flew about, like snow balls in an hard winter; and though Sir Richard had ever avoided all such publick scenes, as that must introduce

duce him to: yet, the gentlemen, and principal freeholders of the county, having had a meeting amongst themselves; soon after waited upon Sir Richard, with an offer to him of the county, at not a farthing expence; nay, even referred to him the nomination of his fellow member.

Sir Richard would fain have declined the honour intended him, and proposed others as more worthy of it; but the unanimous voice declared, that though he should not appear at the place of election, yet they were determined, not only to nominate him, but to get him returned; till at length having withstood their importunities, so long as was consistent with his regard to their friendship, he submitted to act as they should see fit; declaring, that if it would prove agreeable to them, Sir Roger Doughty would be a most acceptable partner to him.

The whole county was now in arms, and the opponents having each retained their myrmidons, fair and foul means were invented, for obtaining of votes, at any rate: while the two baronets lay by under the sole management of their friends, who had so strenuously avowed their interest: not but that multitudes of pretended zealots for the party, could not be restrained from testifying their passion for Sir Richard's service,

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 185

vice, in the plentifullest flaggons of his genuine Nottingham: for the least a man can do, whence once he appears as candidate at an election, is, to set open his cellar door, and cast away the key, that it may never be secured again, till the return is made.

These customers daily increasing, in proportion to the repeated properties of the nappy; less than fourteen days, had done Sir Richard more prejudice under-ground at Addlehall, than he had a probability of repairing in four sessions at Westminster; for the quantity they had consumed was incredible: yet Sir Richard had not grudged at that, could he but have reinstated the quality, which would have taken up half a man's life to perform; they having swallowed in their noisy mirth, and huzza's of Sir Richard for ever; many butts of beer brewed by his father, and all that had successively increased ever since to that time: so that while they were loudly vociferating his name, and praises, they were sucking (as I may say) his vital blood, and doing him an injury scarce to be repaired again while he lived.

Her ladyship, whose brow had scarce ever been known to bend before; notwithstanding the high sense she had of hospitality, could not now choose to rumple, at
this

this enormous devastation ; but Sir Richard asswaged her rising passion in the bud, by an assurance, that compositions in sums of money, to drink elsewhere, (which she advised to) would but have sent fresh leeches home to him, to be partakers of the same bounty ; who, the cash failing, would all return to his cellar, while a drop should remain behind. He told her ladyship, that as he was now embarked, there was no stepping on shore again, and that he must proceed through the whole voyage.

The election came on, and the four candidates appeared ; when upon the show, the foreigners carried it all to nought, by their hired forces ; and then Sir Richard would willingly have thrown it up, and withdrawn ; but his friends, (who unless they had greatly miscounted noses, were very certain of a majority) demanded a poll ; upon the close of which, the numbers fell so weightily upon the two baronets, that the intruding candidates fled by night, nor ever after appeared, to discharge the large reckonings, wherewith the doors, shutters, and wainscot of numberless poor publicans were painted ; most of which remained, as monuments of the undoubted credit of their owners, till time wiped them off ; for our gentry themselves, had by proper management

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 187.

ment amongst the Cornish boroughs, prevented any hue and cry after them.

Though Sir Richard, and his fellow member, had not paid for a single vote, or otherwise spent a shilling in the election; yet they tendered their friends every penny that had been disbursed on their account: but not a man would accept any thing, alledging that their charges had been so trifling, as not to bear a mention. This obliged Sir Richard, and his co-member, each, to make a publick invitation to all their good friends, which were both so exquisitely executed, as to give a general satisfaction; but what above all disgusted the members, upon examination of the pole was, that most of those who had sucked deepest at their vessels, had given their votes against them; the money of the other side standing by them on the day of trial, while the beer had slid gently from them.

Preparations were now set on foot, with all alacrity, for a winter's journey to London; and Smith the grocer, who was by this time grown a man of considerable fortune, had taken them an whole house in Pall-Mall, only such a small part, as remaining still in the landlady's hands, entitled her to the appellation of house-keeper.

The

The cavalcade was truly grand, and performed with all order and decency; for in the first place, marched twenty-four of Sir Richard's tradesmen, two and two, neatly clothed, and in the ensigns of their several orders. Then forty of his tenants, two and two; his bailiff and clerk; four footmen in livery, two and two, on horseback, leading sumpture horses; his own body coach and six, with the member, his lady, mother, and sister Ringwood, boxes, portmanteaus, and baskets, fore and aft to the coach head; the old coach and four with the housekeeper, lady's woman, a maid and cook, stowed as before chuck-full; under officers without number, (not intended for town) to close the procession.

In this order they began and continued their march to Nottingham, where halting for dinner; after a running meal, and a skin full of beer, all but the immediate attendants upon the member taking leave; on their return, Sir Richard set forward for Melton Mowbray, where the caravan for the first night lodged.

They reached Rockingham by dinner next day, intending to lie at Wellingborow; for being so heavy laden, they could not make over long stages. It was a fine bright evening, and as they came within two miles of

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 189

of their inn, one of the servants on horse-back, spying a basket by the hedge side, in a wide part of the road, rode up to it.

Her ladyship, on his dismounting for it, inquired what it was? To which the fellow replied, a basket; but what were its contents he knew not, for it was sewed over with a packthread, very neatly. Give it into the coach, said she, we'll set it at our feet, perhaps somebody will own it at Wellingborow; if not, you may make the most of it.

Mrs. Ringwood was extending her hand to receive it, and had just got it within the coach window, when they all heard a low cry, as of a kitten; which proceeding (as Mrs. Ringwood judged) from the basket; she, in a surprize, dropt it out of her hand into her ladyship's lap; the jar of which little fall, occasioned a cry, both much louder, and longer than before.

A violent consternation seized them all, and the old lady called to put it where they had it. Mrs. Ringwood was of the same opinion; but her ladyship replying, that in all probability it was some poor helpless exposed infant, cast off by its unnatural parents, and as it might be smothered in its confinement, should it be returned to its former situation; she could not, she said,
esteem

esteem it a christianly part, to deliver it up to a probability of perishing ; or one of the least worthy actions of her life, to take it with her, and provide for its support. Then calling for a knife, and gently cutting the string, upon removing a thin cloth, which was supported by a bow of whale-bone, from falling flat to its face, she laid open a most charming male baby, of scarce a fortnight old, (as the women all guessed) cleanly drest, in neat, and very fine plain linnen, wrapped in a sattin mantle quite new, with duplicates of most parts of its clothing, folded up, and lying by it. On its breast lay a paper, neatly doubled up, like a letter ; but unsealed ; this, her ladyship unfolding, read as follows :

Good Christian,

WHosoever thou art, who shall shew me compassion, baptize me Thomas ; my name is Ashby, my descent not mean, by my father, but of the first rank by my mother ; nor may'st thou possibly pass unrewarded, in time to come, for thy benevolence.

The above was wrote in such an hand, as denoted the scribe of no mean endowments ; but what they were to conjecture there-

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 191

therefrom, was uncertain. Sir Richard was for sending it to the parish officers, and Mrs. Ringwood was for making all expedition with it; but her ladyship begged leave to prosecute her own pleasure with this little gift of providence; for, as it was cast into her hands, who was no less able than willing to provide for it, she could not believe it to be the work of chance; and accordingly, upon their arrival at the inn, instead of the overseers of the poor, she sent for a nurse; or in the mean time, for any wholesome woman, who could instantly give it the breast; for the poor little creature was quite faint for want of food.

While enquiry was making after a nurse, her ladyship ordered the child to be cried, so that the parent presenting, might have it again; but no one appearing, she chose it a nurse from amongst several who offered, agreed for its keeping, and gave the woman a month's pay before-hand.

Her ladyship then stript the child, and examined it from head to feet, particularizing all its marks in her pocket-book, that in case of it's death, she might not be imposed upon, by some other substituted in it's room; and in case of it's life, that she might ever know it for the same. She then sent for a clergyman, and had it baptized,
by

by the christian names of Thomas Gotham, herself standing god-mother, and Sir Richard, with the landlord of the inn, god-fathers; then having purchased several necessaries for it, which she was sensible the child must want before her return; and lest the nurse might be delayed in her payments, and might want money sooner than she should see her; she left six months pay in the landlord's hands, and recommended both to him, and the parson, to have an eye over the child, and see that it had justice done it.

Thus having settled the oeconomy of the little infant, they moved again the next morning on their journey, and by deliberate marches, reached their new apartment the fourth evening.

Sir Richard having taken his seat in the house, was now entered upon a new scene of life; wherein, though he was for some time at first only bewildered, without the least comprehension of what was transacting; yet, before the close of the sessions, by a constant attendance, and indefatigable application, he had made such judicious observations, and remarks, as had rendered him master, of all the more common, of the standing orders of the house; and by his constant appearance there, being chosen upon

upon many private committees, and never absenting himself from publick ones, he was rendered able to speak on several occasions, being always well heard and received.

Mrs. Ringwood, about the end of the preceding year, had received intelligence from a man drest like a sailor, (who gave out that he was just arrived from New England,) of the death of her husband there; of which he gave her so many circumstances as fully induced her credit to it; as that he was perfectly acquainted with him, that he had often talked of her, and Sir Richard's family, with the occasion of his leaving England; and that in his last illness, he laid a strong injunction upon him, in case he should not recover, to inform her of his death, so soon as he returned home; assuring him, that he would hear where she was, by some of Sir Richard's family, who would be most likely to know, of any body.

Mrs. Ringwood, to whom this news could not but (in many respects) prove agreeable enough, though the loss of so near a part of one's self, cannot happen without some sorrow; having entertained the man very handsomely, and made him a genteel present for the trouble and charge he had been at, in delivering his message to her,

began now to view herself in a light superior to what she had done, and soon wiped away both tears from her eyes, and grief from her heart; nor was she destitute of all hopes, being not an old widow, and far from disagreeable, of another husband.

During their residence in town this season, a gentleman belonging to the court, cast his eye upon her, not imagining, (by the appearance of all Sir Richard's family) but as his sister, she must be a handsome fortune; or at least, that being a widow, she was possessed of a plentiful jointure. He therefore gaining an opportunity of visiting the family, at length offered love to her.

Sir Richard, and the ladies, were soon informed of this; and upon inquiry, the gentleman having some paternal estate, and also a considerable post, they highly approved of his addresses; and that Mrs. Ringwood might with the better grace receive'em, without the mortification, at last, of being rejected, as unworthy of him (which she feared would be the case, when matters should come to be scrutinized) her brother assured her, he would give her three thousand pounds, and the old lady also promised her one, out of her modicum, with the reversion

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 195

sion of all that she had besides, at her death; so that Mrs. Ringwood's scruples being now salved, she suffered the treaty to proceed, with a far better countenance, than before she had encouraged it with.

Matters being settled to the mutual satisfaction of all parties, proper articles were preparing for the settlement, and divers things provided for the wedding; besides several others, yet in imagination only, and a day was upon the point of being concluded on, for the consummation; when the weather proving very fine, Mr. Parker (for that was the intended bridegroom's name) understanding that the ladies had neither of them seen Hampton-Court, proposed a trip thither; and that himself would escort them, the next morning.

Ladies, seldom waiting much importunity for matters of delight, or amusement; they set forwards early, with design of dining at the Toy, and returning in the evening. They had a charming day of it; and were entertained by our lover, in so elegant a taste, as perfectly denoted him the gentleman.

They had almost tired themselves, in traversing the several apartments, the gardens, the park, and minutely surveying every thing worthy of remark there, which

had given the ampler relish to the banquet; then having taken a glass after dinner, they re-entered the coach, on their return, trolling it away in high spirits, till they were between Brentford and Turnham-Green; when the coachman perceiving one of his horses to drop a little before, upon examination into the cause, it was found that he had cast a shoe, and had so considerably battered his hoof, that it would not be advisable to proceed, without another, of which he informed his lady.

Chance had luckily directed them within a small distance of a farrier; but the company not choosing to remain unactive in the coach, till the job was compleated, ordered it up to a little publick house, where they would alight, they said, and stretch their legs, till the coachman was ready to move again.

Mrs. Ringwood, all life and gaiety, while their ladyships were discoursing with Mr. Parker in one of the forward rooms, stepped out, to take a turn in a pleasant little garden, at the back of the house. Her passage to this, lay at the end of a nine-pin-alley, where several ordinary fellows were in warm debate, in relation to their game, all collected into a knot, at the further end of it.

The earnestness of their arguments, which withdrew their attention from her; but the more excited her curiosity, for a sight of them; when one of them turning a little more frontwise to her, the confusion and astonishment which seized on her heart, at the sight of her husband Boozey Ringwood amongst the gamesters, and with a blue apron round him, was inexpressible.

A spectacle so surprizing to her imagination as that of an husband, already supposed to be dead; a second, that was soon to be, at hand; and what might be the consequence of the interview, all darting into her brains at once, had so shocked her, that unable to proceed, or retreat, her legs doubling under her, she with a shriek, dropt upon the spot.

Her cry soon fixed the gamester's eyes upon her, when Mr. Ringwood, had no long struggle with himself, to discover a wife in the fallen lady; but it was no time for him to open his mind in. All hands being busily employed in conveying her to the house, the landlady had laid her on a bed above stairs, before her lover, or the ladies, had been apprized of the accident; and then the good woman entering, informed them of it.

If the ladies were confounded at the report, what did not our lover suffer; whose breast laboured with little less than distraction? He would have ran up, to have formed his own judgment upon her case; but the woman of the house insisting, that a warm bed would be best for her, being to the touch as cold as ice, he was desired to remain below till she was deposited there; nor was it long before she was laid; but now, she fell into such violent fits, and convulsive agitations, as were by no means proper for Mr. Parker to behold her in; and though every imaginable means was employed for her recovery, all proved to small purpose, for above the space of an hour.

As for Mr. Ringwood, he had not the least suspicion of her having singled him out; from his not having seen her till she fell; but hearing she was carried to bed, (lest she, or any one with her, who might know him, should discover him,) he made the best of his way off backwards, nor was he seen about the house again till dark night.

Mrs. Ringwood now growing somewhat more composed, spoke a few words to the ladies, and Mr. Parker, who by this time was admitted to her bed-side; begging them all to return to London, to let her brother know

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 199

know how she was, and that finding herself inclined to rest at present, she should be glad to see her brother only, in the morning; for that she would continue where she was that night.

You may be sure, not a soul of them would come into that scheme, but all insisted on staying with her; till perceiving their importunities to grow irksome to her, the old lady desired her daughter and Mr. Parker to return, and that she would remain with her daughter Ringwood; but neither would this please; till being very faint with over-talking, Mrs. Ringwood, with vehement emotion declared, how barbarous a thing it was, to a person in her condition, not to be gratified, in so trifling a matter; but that if it was desired, that one of them should stay with her, she begged it might be only her sister Gotham, and that they would return, and send her brother, to fetch her away in the morning.

Mr. Parker, and her mother, perceiving it to be in vain to oppose the current of her inclination, took their leaves, and her ladyship kept close by her sister; who soon after, desiring a glass of mountain to raise her spirits, took her ladyship by the hand, and thus began with her.

Dearest sister, said she, I am under such a strait, as has distressed my very soul. It is impossible for you to conceive the agitation of my whole frame, since I have unfortunately entered these doors: though, why call I it unfortunate, since I am persuaded it is providential? Or so many things could not have concurred, to the discovery I have made here. I have such confidence in you, sister, added she, and such an opinion of your justice, and judgment; that it is to you alone, I can unfold the secret my heart is oppressed with; and from you, I hope for that consolatory advice, I am unable of myself, to apply to my encumbered senses.

After all this preface, lady Gotham was strangely puzzled, to think what the ensuing history would contain; nor was she impatient for the knowledge of it; little doubting, but some offence she had taken at Mr. Parker, either in his person, speech, or behaviour to her, must have occasioned all this disturbance. She replied, that her sister was sensible, she might command her any thing, within her power; nor could she distrust her fidelity: but if it was what claimed the exercise of a nice judgment, she feared, lest she might prove deficient: however, if she would propound her difficulty,

culty, she would act for her with the same integrity as for herself, and give her the same advice.

Alas! sister, said Mrs. Ringwood, my case is indeed deplorable. You know I have been apprized of Mr. Ringwood's death, and that from as evident testimony, as the nature of such cases, of distant transactions, could require; even by a person present at the time. We have so, replied her ladyship. It is all false, returned Mrs. Ringwood, all an absolute forgery.

Her ladyship, imagining her sister to have been overcome with the vapours, or that the violence of her disorder had affected her brain, and that all proceeded from the roving only of her disturbed fancy, told her so, and persuaded her to lye quiet, and go to rest, as what would at present be of most advantage to her; but soon perceived, she had mistaken her mark. No, no, dear sister, said Mrs. Ringwood, my head roves not. I am but too much fixed to a single subject. In short, the person whom we thought dead, is still living; nay, my own eyes, my own senses, have been satisfied of it, as I beheld him at play, with an herd of slovenly fellows at nine-pins, behind the house, with a blue apron round him; this I am sure of, and (by that token) that he

is either the master of, or tapster, at this very house.

O! what will all my golden prospects with Mr. Parker amount to! what? am I to score beer at this ale-house, at last, for my bread! and serve his dirty customers! this, this must be my case, if ever he finds me out; nay, I am resolved not to avoid him, which is my reason for tarrying here this night: for as to Mr. Parker, happen what will, I can never more look him in the face.—I am almost distracted; therefore, dear sister, assist me, and if possible, extricate me from this gulph of sorrows.

Lady Gotham would fain have persuaded her, that it was only some illusion that had deceived her senses; and that, though probably she might have seen one nearly resembling Mr. Ringwood, yet that it was scarce possible to have been him, who could not have been any time in England without making some enquiry after her, or being seen by some one, who would have informed her of it: but she still persisting in it, that it was her identical husband, her ladyship took occasion of going into the kitchen, and of peering about the yard, and below stairs, in hopes of meeting with this representative of her deceased brother; where at length, she convinced herself, that
her

her sister had not erred ; but that it was absolutely Boozey Ringwood himself : however, though she was now perfectly confirmed in it ; she took not the least particular notice, by speech, or otherwise, whereby he might but suspect that she knew him ; lest not imagining his disguise to have proved his protection, he might have been more scrupulous of showing himself to her afterwards.

Her ladyship having proceeded to a demonstration, returned to her sister, and told her so ; but declined her opinion what to do, till the arrival of Sir Richard in the morning, when a grand consultation was to be held upon it : so that having both supped, they spent that night together.

C H A P. XIV.

Discovery of Mrs. Ringwood to her husband. Debates thereon. Has another wife. He quits claim to her.

WE must have liberty to believe, that Mrs. Ringwood had but a restless night of it ; which also preventing her ladyship's repose, what could two wakefull women do together, but prattle till morning : and indeed, this was their employment,

ment, till such numberless schemes had been erected, and platforms laid down, as had but ten times more distracted poor Ringwood's brain than ever.

Sir Richard was with them betimes, when her ladyship, at his sister's request, unveiled the whole scene to him. It immediately struck him, that Ringwood had never been out of England, and that he had hatched, and dispersed the story of his death, but as a stratagem, to prevent all further enquiry after him; whereby, having, as he guessed, quieted his wife, he had married the widow, who kept that house; but nothing in the world so easy, said he, as at first view of a she-publican, to pronounce whether she has been an old stander that way, or not.

The first step Sir Richard took was, to ask for his landlord, on pretence of bespeaking his breakfast; when full three-fourths of the wedded couple appeared before him, in the person of his jolly yoke mate, demanding what his honour would be pleased to have with her husband? Only to converse a little with him about the country, good woman, said he, as I love to do when travelling through strange parts. She replied, he was not just then within, but on his return would send him. Sir Richard bespoke

bespoke some coffee, and bad her do so. He demanded how long she had kept that house? Almost twenty years, she said. Have you been so long married, demanded he? She had now her fourth husband, she said; but to him she had not been married above a twelve-month? And pray, what is his name? Collier, she replied. Well, said Sir Richard, I shall be glad to see him when he comes in.

Ringwood being abroad when Sir Richard alighted, knew not what guests were in his parlour; so that his wife telling him a gentleman wanted him in the fore-room, he bolted bluntly in, with a did your honour call? And was too far advanced for retreating; when Sir Richard arising, and taking him by the hand; brother Ringwood, said he, don't you know me? Sir,—Sir,—Sir Richard.—Gotham,—Sir,—I think.—Is that your lady, fir?—What do I see?—My wife there?—O my dear soul; (running to her)—Hold fir, said she, let me know by what right you claim me for a wife? I am a cast off, for the embraces of a larger arm full of blessings, I perceive. What means my love? said Ringwood.—by heaven.—

No oaths fir, no swearing, said Sir Richard. I remember the time when you married

married my sister, she is still living, and you have another wife; how reconcile you these things?—I another wife? said Ringwood,—or else my fat hostess lies, said he. What! Mr. Ringwood, was this the death that you died at New England? A death only to my sister, I presume, and then it was New England with you.

Ringwood felt conviction to fall so heavily upon him, that it weighed him to his knees. He confessed his never having quitted England; but being almost reduced to starving, he had indeed married the woman of that house; not for love, they themselves would acquit him of that, if they had seen her; but meerly for a subsistence. He intreated all their pardons; necessity had driven him to it, and he would still reclaim and leave her, if he could but have any prospect of support: but hoped, by her appearance, that some good fortune had befallen his wife in his absence; for he could not have expected to have seen her in such good company.

Nor ever had you, said Mrs. Ringwood, if this gentleman and lady had proved like you and me. What should we have done for them, in our circumstances? Should we have fed them with our hounds? I fear me not; but perhaps have spurned them from
from

from our gates, t'have sought ignoble charity in homely cottages, moistening their home baked crust in some still stream.

O! how I loath our stiff gentility,
When starting from the touch of low born blood,

(As then we call'd it, and I idly thought)
But fully am convinc'd by this example,
(Clasping her ladyship in her arm)
That actions noble, generous, humane,
Enrich the blood; not bootless ancestry.

Mrs. Ringwood was going on, when her husband asked if it was possible, that lady Gotham should have advanced her to what she then appeared? It is, said she; her virtues are incircumscribable. I name her, for the authoress; for though the expence may be deemed my brother's, yet the grace that yields it flows from her, my brother being too good a judge of her worth, to suffer a syllable of her's to pass unregarded; nay, was her eye but once to lour upon me, whereto must I fall, but to the wretched state you left me in. I urge not this, sir, to ingratiate myself to my sister, my friend; no, she wants it not; my difficulty would be, to disaffect her, to me, whose benevolence extends to all mankind.

Mr,

Mr. Ringwood, said Sir Richard, (who wanted some private talk with his wife and sister) you may perhaps lose that time with us, which may be more beneficially employed elsewhere; we shall dine with you to day; prepare for us; and we shall then be glad of your company again.

Dearest sir, and ladies, said Ringwood, let me intreat you not to mention me by the name of Ringwood, but Collier, (which I now go by) or to utter a word of what has passed between us in publick; for my wife without, will never bear it.—She is of a violent temper, sir, at the best; but when raised, the devil himself can't lay her again.—I am obliged to be exceedingly upon my guard how I behave to her; but should she once gain the least hint of my having another wife, she'd not trust to the law for my execution; she'd play the part of judge, jury, and jack-ketch upon me; I should never stir out of her presence alive again; let me therefore beg you to be private, I will do whatsoever you shall advise me to; but, as I say, pray keep it from my old wife.

When they had gotten the room to themselves again, brother, said Mrs. Ringwood, what an undone woman am I, to be thus still linked to a man, I can never more
love,

love, after so vile an imposition as the story of his death, in order to compass a more ignoble purpose, in his second marriage to this beastly creature, in preference to me? How can any thing after this, I say, reconcile my affection to him? No, it is impossible; and I am henceforth in the marriage state, condemned to perpetual widowhood, and every inlet stopt to my advancement.

Sister, said the baronet, I admit the necessity of your sorrow, and pity you; but conceive you have the justest grounds for a prosecution against such a deceitful villain; even to death itself; nor would I, for favour or affection desist from it. What? Shall the life of a virtuous woman be rendered miserable, because an husband, in contradiction to all laws, human and divine, shall think fit in his licentiousness, to follow his own dictates, regardless of her pain? No; let right take place, and if one of the twain must be happy, let it be the innocent, not the criminal. I allow, that could you both be still so happy, peace ought to be sought for, and embraced; but then, not with the adulterer: nor see I how, without a crime, you can ever cohabit with him again: then what but a vigorous prosecution can discharge you from him?

I am

I am in a great dilemma, said Mrs. Ringwood, nor know I what to act, or how to avoid it, without an inconvenience. With what face can I, who have so long encouraged the suit of Mr. Parker; at length, declare to him, that I am married, and have all this while been fooling with him? Or void of what horror, can I appear in a court of judicature, in condemnation of the man to death, who is still my husband? Should I prosecute him to a divorce, the means are disagreeable, the method's dilatory, and the cause disgraceful to myself, as I have ever judged it to others; yet, what can be said? Must I tamely acquiesce to injuries I may avoid? Is it only criminal in me to part from an husband legally, who has abandoned me basely, and unjustifiably? Am I to suffer for innocence, while himself shall riot in iniquity? And yet a prosecution is what my soul abhors.

Since you are so averse from that method, said Sir Richard;—suppose you take a middle course, and should compound the matter with him. You see how he dreads the rage of our hostess, who has equal right with yourself to distress him. He has acted injuriously, not less with her than with you; then what will he not come into, to screen himself from her violence? Let him relinquish

quish all claim to you. Let him remain in peace with his new bargain, while you pursue your own schemes with Mr. Parker, then your legal husband.

Legal husband? Sir Richard, replied her ladyship; take care you fall not into Mr. Ringwood's error. Can my sister have two legal husbands, more than he have two legal wives, at once? Were it in our powers, by any act of our own to pronounce upon the legality, or illegality of marriage, there would soon be an end of the indissoluble connubial knot, the cement now, of both civil and social unity; and nought but disorder, and confusion would be introduced to families.

Dear sister, said Mrs. Ringwood, as I cannot, without a crime, cohabit more with him, and consequently must disjoin myself from him, will not (as my brother says) his quitting claim to me, and consenting to my pursuit of my own measures, be actually the same between us, as if he was dead? For so he will then be to me. And will not my just refusal to live with him, even prove a mitigation to his own offence ever after, with his second wife? And shall we not, by that means, prevent two families from ruin and misery? Will there not otherwise be a third person injured, and that

that an hitherto innocent one? Who unknowingly of his deceit, enjoys herself guiltlessly with him? And may not Mr. Parker, and I, have then the same liberty?

Good sister Ringwood, said her ladyship, these reasons, founded on distinctions above my discernment, may possibly quiet your conscience; I wish they may, if you determine to fix your rest thereon: but to me there is a written law, from which I am not to elongate. I have the letter penned down there, from a wiser head, by an abler hand than my own, and from thence am to steer my conduct. It matters not as to that law, or its validity, that I have eventually rendered it inconvenient to me; for either it is to be obeyed, or it is not; and if every private advantage of parties was necessarily to coincide, ere it was strictly to be pursued, all must then be left to our own vague fancies; and the very essence of the rule or law dwindle into insignificance. These are my thoughts, and till my actions should be brought to square with that written rule, I should not think myself guiltless.

I own I am fallible, you are to act for yourself; but hope you will not take these loose hints in ill part, not being meant so; and

and I wish you may not find cause, to lament any opposition to them.

Her ladyship's advice, clashing so diametrically with the hopes Mrs. Ringwood had sustained from the composition, just mentioned by Sir Richard; no wonder that her sentiments were but little considered, and less adhered to; for calling in Mr. Ringwood, (by the name of Collier) Sir Richard proposed to him, the relinquishing all future right to his sister, as one whom himself had abandoned, and was determined never more to unite, with his person, or interest.

Ringwood, (to whom nothing upon earth appeared armed with more terror in its aspect than his new wife, when enraged) willingly consented to the proposal, and subscribed to whatever Sir Richard wrote; for his only desire in life centering in his being once fairly rid of them, as the case then stood, he made not the least hesitation at the conditions, which would soonest discharge his house of them: so that now, all things being settled, under Sir Richard's management, according to his sister's inclination, she returned to town again a perfect widow, wholly intent upon prosecuting her marriage with Parker.

CHAP. XV.

Parker marries Mrs. Ringwood. Her first marriage discovered to him. He challenges Sir Richard. Lady Gotham meets, and vanquishes Parker.

NO two ever rejoiced more at seeing the reverse of each other, than Boozey and his wife; for he knew nothing of her courtship; and the old lady and Mr. Parker were as glad, to see Mrs. Ringwood return so finely mended; for she even exceeded her natural and accustomed gaiety. The treaty proceeded, and they were made one, in about three weeks afterwards.

Though the bride and bridegroom carried it, with the most uncommon glee, and the kindest of behaviour to each other; yet, lady Gotham viewed her sister's transaction in a melancholy light, nor could she abstain from many disquiet moments on her account. She had no notion, but that her actions were downright adulterous, and lived in pain, for fear of a future discovery; not doubting, should it ever come to be divulged to Mr. Parker, but she should have her full share of the exprobration; nay, she could not form the least excuse for herself,

self, and Sir Richard, for ever conniving at so hainous an enormity. As for the dowager lady, she was wholly ignorant of the affair, their sister desiring it might be concealed from her; so that the whole blame was expected by her ladyship to fall upon her and her husband.

Why? would she say, to herself, have I consented to this injury for the sake of another, who would neither have accorded to it for my own sake, or that of my children? Why was I involuntarily made acquainted with my sister's secrets, who have never perplexed myself with any of my own? Had not her mother been the properest party to have uncased her mind to, and to have dictated for her behaviour, under her wayward circumstances? Why am I so ready to concern myself with the affairs of others? My humanity is so injurious to me; that but for its own intrinsic worth, one would even forswear all beneficence for mankind. It is true, I advised her to the contrary, published my sense of the action, condemned it as criminal; what more could I have done? O! I cannot resolve that question, but to my own condemnation! I should have disclosed the truth to Parker, and then let him have proceeded at his peril; or otherwise, I am an
I aider,

aider, an abettor in the iniquity. How durst I tamely look on, when I saw an innocent party running headlong into that snare, which I foreknew must undo him?

These, and the like, were her ladyship's daily reflections, while her brother and sister Parker, revelled in the most delightful jollity for above four years; and until they were the parents of two sons and a daughter: though her ladyship could never look upon the children with a dry-eye, or without trembling for their deplorable condition.

Much about the fifth anniversary of their marriage (for Sir Richard, till his death, continuing his seat in parliament, they were constantly every winter in town). After Mr. Parker and his lady had dined with Sir Richard one day; as Mr. Parker was quitting their company, on some business of his office, with intent to return again in the evening; just as he had opened the street door to let himself out, he met a mean looking man, seemingly, going to knock at it; Parker imagining that he might want some of the family, called a servant, and himself staid at the door till the servant came; neither choosing to shut the door upon the fellow, or to leave him at it alone.

So

So soon as a footman appeared, Parker moved forward ; but hearing the man, as he thought, enquire for Mrs. Ringwood, and the servant (who was a new comer) answering that he knew no such person, he stepped back, to ask what the man wanted ; judging, that he might bring a message from somebody, who had not been apprized of the change of her name : the stranger replied, that he enquired for one Mrs. Ringwood ; asking, if that was not Sir Richard Gotham's. Mr. Parker answered, it was ; that the lady he named was within, requiring his message ; when the stranger replied, that his errand was to her herself alone.

Mr. Parker returned into the parlour, and informed his lady, of an ordinary looking fellow at the door, who enquired for her, by the name of Ringwood, saying that he must speak with herself. Step, said he, and see what he wants with you ? I'll stay till you come back ; it may not be so proper, perhaps, for me to be let into your privacies ; laughing.

Mrs. Parker had then just set down to whist, and having gathered up her cards ; come, said Mr. Parker, (taking them from her,) I'll play your hand till you return ; but he had scarce seated himself, before they all heard a violent shriek at the door,

and at the same time, a flounce against the wainscot, which startled them prodigiously. Heaven preserve my dear wife! said Mr. Parker; and running, as all the rest did after him, to see what had happened; who should the noise have arisen from, but Mrs. Parker, who then lay extended on the floor, without any soul near her.

What was so ready a conjecture, as that the villain, who ever he was, that sent for her out, had either killed her, or in attempting to rob, had frightened her into that condition; but before they would well have time for thought; the servants, being all collected about Mrs. Parker, were forthwith dispatched after the man, some this way, some that, under the best description, that the shortness of the time would allow, with strict orders, not to return without him; by examining of whom, they might discover the cause of her catastrophe.

They laid her upon a settee in the parlour; where, while they were employing means for her recovery, the servants returning, led in Boozey Ringwood, as the author of the disaster.

Mr. Parker, quickening into fury at the sight of him again, and drawing his sword, which he pointed to his throat; villain, said he, declare the injury you have done:

to

to this lady, and in what part, or you die instantly.

Ringwood, no less terrified at the sight of the weapon so near his windpipe, than the rest of the company were at sight of him, desired Mr. Parker to withdraw the instrument, and he would inform him, both what had happened, and the cause.

This moderating Parker's wrath for a moment, he dropt his hand, and Ringwood proceeded. Sir, said he, all this good company know, that the fallen lady is my wife.—Perfidious rascal ! said Parker, thy wife ?—She is, sir, replied Ringwood, and hath been so for many years past.—Scoundrel, thou ly'st, said Parker ; she is mine, nor will I ever be induced to part with her. Sir, said Ringwood, I came not to make words about her ; but being much reduced, I thought, I could no where apply for relief, so properly as to my own wife. I am glad she is in better bread than I am ; but if she lives well, sir, I won't starve ; as for her being mine, I can prove it, so can Sir Richard, and my lady, nor would she deny it, were she able to speak for herself ; and let me see the man, that dares to with-hold her from me ; but if you, sir, (said he to Parker) have had any criminal

minal affair with her, I shall the better know where to repair for damage.

Sir Richard perceiving matters to be thus inflamed on both sides, and fearing Parker, who was a lofty man, should stab Ringwood, (to prevent the mischief that might ensue,) withdrew Mr. Parker to a corner of the room; where, as far as time would permit, he informed him, that Ringwood having absented himself from his wife, had found means to gain credit with them, of his death, which had induced her to act as she had done, concluding herself a widow; but that the deceit being afterwards discovered, Ringwood had disclaimed all title to her, and that he never expected to have heard more of him.

Parker receiving this account on the most plausible side, began to condemn the imposition upon his wife, and to frame reconciliatory measures, for adjusting matters between them; during which time, her ladyship was so occupied about Mrs. Parker, that greatest part of the discourse had escaped her ear: when at length her sister by degrees recovering, though no ways able to hold a conversation, Parker applied to her ladyship; madam, said he, what an unfortunate man am I, in having my wife thus ravished from my arms, by a person, whom
Sir

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 221

Sir Richard declares to be her real husband, and consequently hath prior right to her ?

It seems amazing to me, that this pretence of his death, should never have been detected before our marriage. Pray when was it you first heard of his being alive ? Her ladyship making a short pause, I must beg you, said Parker, to deal ingenuously with me, how long hath she known it ?

Her ladyship had suffered too much for her past error of concealment, willingly, to be guilty of another misprision of the same nature ; but yet, desirous, so far as possible, to cast a veil over her sister's failing, replied, that she could not now minutely say how long. Was it, said he, after our marriage ? Sir, said her ladyship, my sister herself will be able to resolve you, perhaps, more punctually than I can, the concern being her own ; and I hope she will soon be in condition to gratify you.

Madam, said Parker, by the unwillingness you shew to indulge me, I may presume you mean nothing less ; and therefore will trouble you but with this short demand, was it before, or after our marriage, and how long before, or after ?

Her ladyship, no longer able to delay an answer to so plain a question ; replied, that it was on the very day that she was taken

so ill in her return from Hampton-Court. Ah! madam, said Parker, how much gentler had the family used me, and Mrs. Ringwood too, had they but divulged this secret to me then; but I plainly see, I have been made your property, and that Sir Richard's journey to bring her home, which I might by no means be permitted to take with him, was meerly to concert measures for deluding me: but madam, if Sir Richard proves but of honour equal to myself, that point will not be long adjusting; nor can I, consistent with my own reputation, avoid drawing it into question: then turning from her ladyship, he snatched up his hat, and walked off.

The whole house abounded with the utmost confusion, Mrs. Ringwood grew better, but her ladyship durst not report the worst to her, for fear of a relapse. She was almost distracted at the sight of Ringwood there still, and raved aloud for Mr. Parker to come to her. Ringwood kept his ground, nor would he depart without his wife, he said; he had taken advice upon it; and as he found he was intitled to her, he would have her.

Sir Richard, who had not been privy to her ladyship's discourse with Parker, would have persuaded Ringwood to peace; but it
an-

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 223

answered no purpose, till her ladyship put ten guineas into his hand, and desiring him to call some other time, when her sister might be better able to give him a meeting, he returned her thanks, and left the house.

Ringwood had not been long gone, before Parker sent a letter to Sir Richard, by a porter; but he not being then at home, it was delivered to her ladyship; who observing it to be Parker's hand by the superscription, was under no small apprehension of a challenge; and perceiving that the wafer wherewith it was sealed, was quite wet, she with trembling hand, opened it, verily believing, that should any mischief happen to Sir Richard, through her over scrupulousness, the whole blame might be imputed to her neglect.

It was signed T. Parker, and contained as follows:

Sir, no longer Brother,

THE treacherous part you have played, in providing me children, without a wife, and scandal subsequent thereto, demanding a gentleman like reparation; as you would henceforth be esteemed, meet me in the wood in High-Park, by peep of day to-morrow morning, to adjust all dif-

ferences between us. I need not tell you I wear a sword.

Her ladyship, whose character had ever been to bear misfortunes with magnanimity, when once they became unavoidable, entered into serious consultation with herself, whether she should inform Sir Richard of this letter, or not. As for a sword's-man, she judged him none; neither could she say how far Parker excelled that way. She weighed the consequences of a duel, and started many devices for avoiding it, but all subject to such imputations upon her husband's honour, as she was unwilling to submit to; and thus her mind remained fluctuating, for some time.

She at length started a stratagem, for saving her husband's reputation, and yet giving satisfaction to his antagonist. She secreted the letter from Sir Richard, and having dressed herself, early in the morning, in his clothes; she took a trusty servant with her, who had long served her, and in whom she could perfectly confide; and having made him purchase two stout oaken planks, she gave him proper instructions for following her with them.

She resolved not to exceed her time, and was upon the spot before day-light; nor
was

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 225

was it long before Parker came up. She had disguised herself so as that he might not know her, being drest in Sir Richard's clothes, and covered with his cloak, the cape buttoned up, and her hat flapping; under which, she had blacked her eyebrows, like Sir Richard's, and gummed on a large pair of black whiskers.

They drew near to each other, when in a tone as nearly resembling Sir Richard as possible; Mr. Parker, said her ladyship, we country gentlemen, are not much acquainted with the use of the single rapier: now if we are to fight, I, as the challenged person, have a right to the choice of my weapon; nor doubt I, but one of us may drub the other, till he is perfectly satisfied, with these, (holding both sticks in her hand) and with this advantage too, that the vanquished may still live, to acknowledge it. I shall leave you your choice, and am ready for you upon demand; for you see I have brought no sword with me.

Parker, was not a little staggered at the instrument; and though loth to wave so much honour, as to take advantage of his sword, against an adversary without one; he declared, that the sword was his arms, and that of all other gentlemen, and wondered what was meant by an engagement.

with sticks; her ladyship replied, that the battoon was as peculiarly her's, as the rapier was his arms; but that if he rather chose the back sword, she would engage with that.

Parker, now looking upon himself to be imposed upon, and the day breaking in a little through the trees; O—ze sir, said he, I will be played upon no longer. I came for your blood, and that will I have, or you mine, before we part.—I have been grossly injured, and have a right to demand it. Then stripping to his shirt, the man's a pitiful coward, says he, that thinks to divert his rival from his purpose, by the absence of his sword.—That fault is not mine,—receive your fate, for your folly.

He then drew himself into a posture for the attack, when her ladyship dropping her cloak, and leaning upon one of the sticks, she stood ready prepared for him; but upon sight of her whiskers, and the oddity of her countenance; (for in size and make she differed not much from the baronet) what the devil have we here, so grim? Said he; sir, replied her ladyship coolly, we are met upon a villainous purpose, and should my body be left in the field, I choose not that it should be known for Sir Richard Gotham's; but rather for the ruffian, than the gentle-

gentleman, as that will be the most suitable character.

Parker, by this time out of all patience, made a furious push at her, which was the very thing she watched for ; but e'er ever the sword reached her body, by a turn of her wrist, as quick as lightning, she had diverted the pass, and almost beat the weapon out of his hand ; then following her success, before he could recover his posture, she had knockt him down, and disarming him, threatened immediate destruction, unless he begged his life.

Parker, impatient of being thus foiled, at first refused it ; but she pointing the sword to his breast, and denouncing instant execution, he at length cried out for mercy ; when she gave him her hand to rise. Then snapping his sword, for fear of further mischief, she cast her cloak over her, and directly walked home ; her servant, at a distance, having been spectator of the whole engagement.

C H A P. XVI.

Mrs. Ringwood refused admission to Parker's house. Death of the dowager. Sir Richard and Parker meet. Ringwood and wife reconciled. Settle together.

IT is certain, that not always the conqueror maintains the field ; for her ladyship, as light as air, had almost tript out of the Park, before Parker, (whom she had left behind, cursing his fate, and binding his bleeding head with his handkerchief,) had resolution to quit the scene of action.

Sending her servant before her, she ordered him to keep the coast clear, and to wait for her at the door, till she came ; then stepping up stairs into her dressing room, she slipped on her own apparel, and was ready for breakfast with her family.

Mrs. Ringwood was under the acutest anguish, for that she had heard nothing from Mr. Parker all the next day ; and since he would not approach her, she determined to return to him ; but arriving, on the third morning, in an hackney coach, at his door ; the servant who opened it, upon the first glimpse of her there, clapt it hard to again, nor would be persuaded to return, after several repeated knockings.

This

This cruel usage from Mr. Parker almost broke her heart; for she too plainly read his master's injunction, in the countenance and behaviour of the servant; but as she was in no disposition for raising a tumult in the street (nor indeed would her cause have born it, if she had) she ordered the coach about, and drove back to her brother's.—She there revealed her treatment to her ladyship, grievously bewailing her children.—She invoked the powers of darkness to inclose her, as a wretch unworthy of the light.—Alas! her poor motherless babies—she should never behold them more!—they would be detained from her future knowledge, and if ever they should hear they had a mother, it must be conjoined to the idea of her wickedness.—She was no longer able, under the pressure of her calamities, she said, to support life; and if providence should not sever her from her distresses, she should certainly act some rash part upon herself; for her misery was past endurance.

It was with this melancholy scene, and her dismissal from Mr. Parker's, that she entertained her ladyship, who could only wish her comfort, but afford her no great encouragement, even to hope for the early procuring it; for she assured her what an affliction her second marriage had been to her, ever since it had first happened; and
I that

that the present consequences, or somewhat very near them, were what she had all along concluded upon as unavoidable; or at least, highly probable. That she had scarce ever known it otherwise, but that one crime cherished, had been attended with a fatal train of events, even such as repentance itself would scarce obliterate. She reminded her of the caution she had at first given her, and which she could wish had been pursued; but it was then too late to reflect on what might have been: all therefore that Sir Richard or herself could favour her in, would be to alleviate, as much as in them lay, her sorrow, and that compunction, which she feared would never be in either of their powers absolutely to expel.

Mrs. Ringwood confessed her obligation to her sister, for setting before her in so clear a light, her own failings; declaring she had not the least prospect, that peace of mind and she, should ever more be reconciled; for that while she reflected on her own condition, she now beheld all that had before presented her with so glittering a prospect, only as imps of hell, dressed in the basest deformity.

The old dowager lady, who had for some time kept her chamber, and lately her bed, through infirmity, had not been acquainted with the horrors of this discovery; nor had she

she ever heard of Mr. Ringwood's being alive still; so that she felt not a share of her family affliction: but being over-born with disorders, departed some few days after, in the arms of lady Gotham, her daughter; having long before, by her will, given all that she had to her daughter Ringwood, and made her sole executrix.

This donation amounting to about four thousand pounds, caused Mrs. Ringwood's troubles to sit somewhat lighter upon her; but could not dispel that settled melancholy, to which she seemed to have submitted herself.

Sir Richard had never yet heard a syllable of the challenge Mr. Parker had sent him; nor, though he had many times since met him, did any thing further than the hat pass between them, and sometimes even not that, for several months; but one night, as Sir Richard was at the coffee-house, at the further end of an inclosed table, reading over the news; he was of a sudden hemmed in on both sides, by four or five gentlemen, who discoursing very facetiously, at length drew in Sir Richard to their party, and much pleased they seemed with each other's conversation; when presently, in came Mr. Parker, purposely to meet those very gentlemen there, and therefore was obliged to sit by them. Sir Richard being thus impounded, and the company maintaining
3 their

their stations, one argument drew on another, till he was fairly engaged with Mr. Parker also; and both seeming to carry it very friendly each to other, from thenceforth, they became less shy, and frequently met, and conversed together.

Parker, by this time, having remitted the injury he judged done him by Sir Richard, returned Mrs. Ringwood's fortune, just before the family left town, all which had laid the foundation of succeeding amity between them, and future correspondence.

They were now settled at Addlehall again, for the summer; and Mrs. Ringwood, in some measure had gotten over her melancholy; nor had she heard any thing more from her husband; for though she lived in constant dread of his pursuing her; yet her ladyship, unknown to her, by frequent small presents, had hitherto kept him off; when one day, Ringwood, having by casualty heard of the decease of the old lady, and what an ample provision she had made for his spouse, (his old ale-wife having been sometime dead, and himself turned out of doors by his brewer) was resolved to come in for a snack; so having procured a copy of the will, away he trudged to Addlehall, in search of her.

Her ladyship, who thought to have quieted him as heretofore, without disturb-
ing

ing her sister, would have presented him with ten guineas, which she did not doubt would have sent him to London again, till it was all gone : but, to her surprize, he thanked her ladyship, and rejected her offer ; alledging, that his journey had been undertaken meerly for the sake of his dear wife ; and that he would see her, before he quitted the house.

Mrs. Ringwood would not appear. He insisted on seeing her, nor would he be driven out, till he had ; when having tarried three days, without the least further progress in the affair ; impatient of longer fruitless delay, he took out the copy of his will, and thereby ascertained Sir Richard, that he came not upon a sleeveless errand ; peremptorily demanding, either a sight of his wife, or the whole money to be paid to him.

This growing now to too serious an affair to be trifled with, her ladyship prevailed with Mrs. Ringwood to give him audience, in her presence ; which, with the utmost confusion, and reluctance, she at length consented to.

There is somewhat so placid, imprest upon the faculties, from the reflection of a past intercourse between the sexes, especially if man and wife ; and there naturally arises such a tenderness, and prejudice

dice in favour of each other, notwithstanding past bickerings, and (in foreign judgments) unpardonable crimes; as spite of every artifice, and determination to the contrary, mollifies the most obdurate breast into sentiments of pity, love, and compassion: but to return; the two Ringwoods looked at each other a considerable time, without further speaking, than sir,—madam.—When the rays of each countenance growing brighter, Mr. Ringwood ran to her, and cast himself at her feet.

Most injured lady! said he, let me intreat you, as in every thing else you have heretofore been an heaven to me, resemble it now in your benignity, and forgiveness. I plead not merit, but repentance. I have seen my past failings; nor yet, wholly mine, but my forefathers, who leaving me the shell, without the kernel of an estate, I pleased myself more with the imagination of its visible bulk, than its intrinsic income. I began, where I ought to have ended only; till the terror of abating ought, of my past grandeur, necessarily induced the loss of all. This, madam, and only this, is the real crime which first separated me from you; all that hath since befallen me, hath issued from that source; but as necessary events, from their immediate causes.

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 235

causes.—I married, it's true ;—I had robbed
else.—Could I starve ?—The act had passed,
I own ;—the virtue, never :—for I appeal
to those dear eyes, and to her ladyship's ;
if human nature, not the most depraved,
could love a creature so unwoman-like. I
must pass by that, as taken for granted,
and only subjoin its conveniencies for my
excuse ;—but that impediment now is re-
moved, and she happily dead.

If strong compunction, cruc'ating the soul ;
If mental terrors racking the whole system ?
May plead in my excuse ; I've suffer'd them,
E'en as in hell itself, till cool reflection

Hath happily at length, resum'd her func-
tion,

And bought experience claims sov'reignty.—

Am I the traitor ?—thou the innocent ?—

No, we alike, are plung'd in equal crime ;—

Both penitent ;—both free, may still enjoy

The sacred unity we've vow'd each other.—

My fortune, (nominal) real to me,

Exceeded your's, 'when first we join'd our
hands :—

Your's, (mine in fact) exceeds my present
worth ;

What then forbids our mutual enjoyment,

As erst of mine, so now of your attain-
ments ?

Mrs.

Mrs. Ringwood was struck so dumb at her husband's pathetick speech, wherein she could not but acknowledge too great a share of truth ; that though she had sketched out to herself several exclamations against him, yet she was at a loss for nothing more than how she should introduce them ; he had confessed his offence ; given reasons, was sorry, and had suffered as well as herself, and was still ready to atone for all.

Her former affection recurred, and she was silent. Her ladyship then taking up the cause, told Mr. Ringwood, that the fight and speech of him, after so many intervening accidents, since they had freely conversed together, could not but have cast such a ruffle over her sister, as must obstruct the free passage of much that she might otherwise have to offer to him ; and that as he had now delivered his mind to her, it was but reasonable, to allow her time to recover from her confusion, before she replied ; and that herself would be responsible, for her meeting him with an answer the next morning.

Ringwood replied, that far from endeavouring to surprize her into any thing, he would patiently wait the appointed time ; but hoped it might not be taken amiss, if he should offer to salute her. Then taking her

her hand, and she rising to him ; I know not what passed, but from that instant, the business was all over ; and as he was leaving the room, his wife told him, that if he would take but a turn or two in the hall, she would admit him again presently.

Applying then to her ladyship. Dear sister, said she, what would you advise me to ? Her ladyship smiling, replied, that if she had any judgment in women, that question was put rather of the latest, esteeming her to be already past advice. Not, added she, but that I see you are entertaining my scheme, though perhaps not in all its branches. Then dear sister, said Mrs. Ringwood, what is your opinion ?

Sister, said her ladyship, I cannot imagine that the commission of one error, can give the least countenance to any other, on either side ; or even to persist in that. You have both been to blame ; but still you are each other's property. Can you rectify past oversights by present failings ? You are, in my mind, to live as you are, married folks ; mutually forgiving past injuries, assisting, and comforting each other ; but, as you have now a subsistence, which he ought to share with you in equal proportion, it may not be amiss, to guard against accidents, by so disposing of it, with his free consent, as
that

that you may no more be subject, to the same inconveniencies you have already been both sufferers by.

Thou hast made a short abstract of my very heart; my dear, said Mrs. Ringwood,—Shall I call him in again?—Or rather, let me, said her ladyship.—No, no, my dear, said Mrs. Ringwood, it will (with your leave) express more affection from myself: so running to the door, she again introduced him.—My dear, said she, her ladyship and I have considered your proposal, for our cohabiting together, and she desires to offer you her sentiments.

So, thinks Ringwood, affairs have taken a fine turn in my absence. Her ladyship then began. Brother Ringwood, the office of parting man and wife, is too mean a post for me to appear in, who had much rather heal, than widen all manner of family breaches, especially between those, whom nature and religion have conjoined by peculiar sanction.

It were my opinion, that you both (casting intirely out of the scale what is past, and burying it in absolute oblivion) look forward, consider your interests as mutual, and inseparably united. Let love, and affection, both usher in and conclude all transactions between you; that heartily,
and

and harmoniously joining in one uniform regard for each other, the remainder of your lives yet to come, may compensate for your past misfortunes: and that no rub may still lie in the way of your true happiness, let it be considered, what accommodation you have to set out under. Let that be so secured, and in such manner, as under careful management, you may enjoy yourselves henceforward, like reasonable beings.

When your income is once fixed, it will be my sister's duty, as to her own particular, not to strain you beyond, what she will be then sensible you can spare; nor can you exclaim against her tenacity, of what (otherwise calling your own) you might possibly be too lavish of, for both your interests.

Mr. Ringwood was so charmed with her ladyship's reasonable, and obliging manner of expressing herself, that he assured her, he was so far from aiming at a reconciliation with his wife, merely for the sake of her possessions, that in case her ladyship (whose noble sentiments had captivated him) would but act therein, as she saw proper, he would execute to her a chart blanc, to be superscribed at her discretion. Engaging to adhere unconditionally, to whatever she directed: but hoped, that in the mean time,

time, he should be admitted to freedom of intercourse with his dear wife.

Her ladyship replied, that if it was both their requests, that she should act between them, she would undertake it, as if it was for herself; and then left them together; but never were two kittens more loving, or playful, than this old married couple, new vampt; even to becoming bedfellows, from that night, for ever after.

Her ladyship having laid the train in her own brain before, a small time served to reduce it to perfection; when she brought it to Ringwood to peruse: but both himself, and wife, relying so indefinitely upon her ladyship's justice, and judgment, neither of them could be persuaded to read a letter of it, before they signed it: for they both declared, that let it contain what it would, if it was but dictated by her ladyship, it would be most agreeable to them: but so soon as it was executed, and out of their powers to revoke; upon examination had of its contents, they professed, that no proposals upon earth could have been more equitable, or more agreeable to them; nor was it long before they went to house-keeping, within few miles of Sir Richard's, with whose family they kept up a perfect correspondence: Mr. Ringwood turning
out,

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 241

out, though not the most polite, yet one of the soberest of husbands, and she as valuable a wife and companion.

C H A P. XVII.

Debate on the duel, between Sir Richard and Parker. Discovered who fought him. Account of Dolly's family and their successors. Marriage of her three eldest daughters. Courtship of Miss Claudia by a nobleman.

SIR Richard, the next winter, on his return to London, brought up his brother and sister Ringwood, to partake of the amusements of the town with him; when he again fell so often into Parker's company, that they became constant club-mates, and as great intimates as ever, save that Parker would never enter his house while Mrs. Ringwood was in it; not that he had the least objection, he said, to her presence or conversation; but for that he doubted not the confusion she must be under, in his company.

One night, as Sir Richard and Mr. Parker, with one more old croney, were taking a merry glass together at the tavern,

and discoursing upon a duel that had happened on the foregoing day, in Hyde-Park; Sir Richard, said Mr. Parker, I have often thought, since the skirmish between you and me there, how much happier we came off in whole skins, than several who have before, and since, parted with their beings there.

What? said Mr. Chambers (that being the name of the third person) had ever you and the knight a rencounter there? Ay, replied Parker, we had, and the knight was too many for me; I was never so mauled in my life. Would you think it, said he, he put by my pass with a cat-stick, and knocking me down, disarmed me, and made me beg my life, before I could think he would have stood a thrust, or had even warmed his blood with me.

Tom, said Sir Richard, when I have occasion for a strong voucher, I am glad I know where you live. In troth, said Parker, I am not so much ashamed at acknowledging my overthrow, as I should have been of the victory, had my pass taken place; for, in all probability, you had never stirred a foot more.

Well shot! however, said Sir Richard; but this is your night for rodomontados, I suppose; come, go on with your diversion; but Chambers, said he, let me advise you

you not to credit a word he says, lest repeating the story after him, somebody should suspect you, for what, I hope, will never prove your character. Nay, said Parker, surely if I who own myself subdued, stick not at the mention of it, you, who may do it with more honour, need not scruple it.

I profess, said Sir Richard, I know not what you mean; unless it be to fill up the blanks in our conversation; if so, all's well enough; but if you would be thought in earnest, I much doubt whether you are well in your senses. Surely, Sir Richard, added Parker, you have a very short memory. Why? don't you remember, when you took off your cloak, you had not brought your sword? and appearing in large black mustaches, correspondent to your eye-brows; I asked how you came to disguise yourself? and you told me, that people upon villainous purposes ought to look like ruffians? that you almost beat my sword out of my hand? don't you recollect this, when you was last in town?

It would not be a point of good manners in me to contradict Mr. Parker, said Sir Richard: but de'el take me, if I know a tittle of it. Nor that I sent you a challenge, said Mr. Parker, I presume? Just as much of one as the other, said Sir Richard; your

head rambles upon some transaction with another person, and would erroneously father it on me. O—ze sir, said Parker, in some warmth, another person? in your doublet then, he was, I can safely take my oath.

In short, the debate ran so high, between the baronet and Mr. Parker, both ready to swear themselves in the right; that it tried Chambers's skill, even to the pinch notes, to prevent a downright rupture: but however, he at last quieted them both, and they parted, seemingly, good friends.

Sir Richard, at bed-time, was so full of what had happened, that he could not help mentioning it to his lady; wondering, he said, what the man would have been at; it looked to him, as if he had urged such a falsity, by way of affronting, and picking a quarrel with him; and then he repeated to his lady, all the circumstances that Parker had pretended the affair was attended with: nay, added he, had it not been for Chambers's interposing, we had been at dagger's drawing: for to have a man insist upon so impudent a lie to one's face, was the height of provocation. What did he take me for? I am neither so old, or stupid, yet a while,

as not to know what I do, from one year to another.

Her ladyship attended to the story under no small perplexity ; for though they had come off scot-free this time, it was more than probable, some other occasion would revive the scene, and minister occasion for a duel ; especially as Sir Richard took some reflections, upon his memory, but in bad part.

Her ladyship having conned this over for some time, in order to prevent mischief for the future, plainly told him of the challenge, and that her fears for his life, had put her upon playing the part she had acted ; hoping thereby, to save his honour, without his personal risque.

O Dolly ! said the knight, (clasping her in his arms) what do I owe thee ! my debt was surely large enough before, by every embellishment of life ; but this addition of life itself too, whereby to enjoy those blessings, reduces me too low in my own esteem : and was this, at the hazard of thy precious person, for me ? If one of us must have gone, think you not how blessed I had been, myself the victim, rather than you.

Sir Richard's mind ran so upon this adventure, that he could scarce sleep all night, or could the morning bring him rest, till he

had obtained her ladyship's consent, for sending Parker a message, that they would both dine with him that day.

They were very merry all dinner time; but no sooner was all removed, save the bottles, and the servants were retired; than Mr. Parker, said Sir Richard, 'since you would not credit me last night, upon my own word, I have brought my evidence, that I was in another place, at the time of the supposed duel between us; and that every fact, imputed by you to me, was wholly chimerical.

Come, come, old friend, said Parker, let it drop; we'll not dispute that point now, before the lady; her sex is too tender, to receive the sound of swords, and duelling, without being shocked at it: but I may appeal to her, since the issue hath proved so favourable, if she has never heard you mention the challenge you received from me. Till the very last night, replied her ladyship, upon my honour, I never did; and that was, that you then told him so.

More mysteries, said Parker. Ay, replied Sir Richard, and now I must further add, that my wife has a quarrel with you. With me, sir? replied Mr. Parker. Ay, with you, answered he; and I fear, will challenge you, too. No creature on earth should

should be more readily answered, I'll promise you, Sir Richard, said he, were she but at liberty to engage me; but pray, from whence arises her resentment to me? For ascribing a victory gained at the hazard of her blood, to any arm but her own, answered Sir Richard. The lady, victory, and ascribed to another arm, sir? pray, said Parker, explain?

Then, to detain you no longer in the dark, Tom, said Sir Richard, we were both in the right last night; myself in the negative of the person, and you as to the affirmative of the fact. I wish thou couldst pair her; this is your champion, and your conqueror; for as to your challenge, the first word I ever heard of it, was from yourself.

My friend, said Parker, you amaze me; but pardon my faith, which cannot precede a confirmation of it from those fair lips. (Pointing to her ladyship) I must confess the charge, as most true, said she. I met you, in Sir Richard's stead; but be not cast down, Mr. Parker, you are not the first hero that has been vanquished by a lady.

O madam! returned Parker, I am at enmity with that hand, which advanced an instrument of death, against all that I ever met with worth preserving in the sex. What

a stupid blockhead was I, not to discover it was your ladyship, even by instinct? for disquisition would not have answered the purpose, you had so disguised yourself; but blush not at the fact you came to execute, when that alone proclaims the deity within you.

Are you content? said Sir Richard. I am, sir, replied he, and shall for ever praise that guidance, which averted my hand from murder; as this excellent lady must have proved the object.

At his return in the evening, Sir Richard found his two eldest sons upon a visit to him, for a little time, from Oxford; so that the next day, he sent for three of his daughters from Hackney, (where they were at a boarding-school) to accompany them; but surely, such a family of children were never seen together; for even the youngest, in their mien and behaviour, shewed a surprising dignity, mixt with the most affable dispositions imaginable: though what less could be expected, from ingenious natures, under the exquisite instructions of such a mother?

Her ladyship would not suffer even her eldest son, the heir to so fine an estate, to be trained up in idleness; for she used to say, they should have no opportunity of blaming their parents for their vacant hours.

She

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 249

She would give them callings, whether they pursued, or deserted them; but they should at least know what it was to get, that they might use more consideration in spending.

As for her ladyship's own family, there was not one of them, but had thriven miraculously; as I shall take this place, to declare to my reader.

Flame, who had been apprentice to a packer, had fallen into the woollen manufactory also, and was deputy alderman of his ward, had married a country gentleman's daughter, with seven thousand pounds to her fortune, had three children, kept his coach, and his country seat was in Kent.

Cinder Clod, who had served his time to an hosier, had struck into so large a way of exportation, first of his own commodities, and by degrees of many others, that he was become a general merchant; but especially, traded very largely to the West-Indies; was a batchelor, had fined for sheriff, and money rolled into his compting-house like dirt.

Ash, was generally reported one of the closest men about town; lived snug, and private; and having left off the business of an hatter, dealt in insurances, and in all manner of private bargains, having an uni-

versal knowledge in the value of goods, and spending but little, was immensely rich.

Smith, the grocer, was retired with a pretty fortune to Worcestershire, his native country. And Blaze, being married to a brewer in great business, lived like a lady.

Ember, since the death of old Clod and his wife, was married to a nobleman's steward in the country : and Spark, having laid two more farms to his own, was become gentleman farmer : so that her ladyship's care for her own stock had ceased some time.

In this winter sessions, Sir Richard having made himself somewhat considerable in the house, he applied to his friends at court, for some settlement for his brother Ringwood ; and as he had never been an importunate suitor before, a place of six hundred a year was given him, at the first word, to which he applying very sedulously, became a constant resident in town, and lived very genteely.

Her ladyship having seven daughters, the eldest about twenty-five years of age, was desirous of seeing them all well married, if possible, in her own life-time. She carried the three seniors on all visits with her, and to publick entertainments ; in some of which, the eldest having charmed a young baronet

baronet of Lincoln, he followed her the next winter to town, and married her, with ten thousand pounds to her fortune.

It was no sooner publickly known, what fortune Sir Richard would give with his daughters, than matches were proposed for the two next, who both settled incomparably well; when the fourth and fifth being brought home; the first of these, at a ball at court one night, stole the heart of a young nobleman, the Lord W——M——s.

He was but lately issued into life, being not above two and twenty; but of passions so forcible, that he was not to be diverted from waiting of her home.

Her ladyship was with her, and the young gentleman making an extraordinary appearance, she could not be so rude as not to admit him into her house; he was one of the most sincere and hearty young fellows in the kingdom, and burning with desire for the young lady, he had not been seated five minutes, before he began to explain himself, in the following manner:

Madam, said he, to her ladyship, you will no longer wonder at my intruding thus, into your company first, and now to your fire-side; when you consider, that there are attractive motives in life, which young fel-

lows can no ways withstand. I presume, this young lady is your daughter; and doubt not her being worthy, of all that this world can bestow upon her. I am as yet a perfect stranger to your family, but can continue so no longer to her.

I must confess to you, madam, that an accademick life, and close application to my studies, hath hitherto diverted my thoughts from launching into the fair world; though my birth, and station in life, have accustomed me to the society, not only of those whose charms have been esteemed transcendent, but whose fortunes have been of the first class; yet, give me leave, madam, to assert, I have never till this night, been sensible of what it is to love, nor have I now the least hope of being ever freed from it.

You will excuse my blunt manner of expressing my passion, madam, for such it really is, for this lady, (pointing to Miss Claudia, that being her ladyship's fourth daughter's name) beyond all limits, when you consider me, but as a novice in the art. I have never been accustomed to artificial disguises, nor hope I, that my suit will be the less readily admitted, for its homely guise, and honest intention; for no thought, but that of making this lady unhappy, can
divert

divert me from pursuing my further request, for her favour, under your approbation.

I own, madam, was I master of the rest of the creation to an atom, I would barter it all for her ; nor can I give other reason why, but that I cannot conceive wherein happiness can be placed without her.

You will say, it is possible, that I have not commenced my suit in proper terms ; I cannot disown it : but I have expanded my heart to you, and if in doing that, I have exceeded the modes of decency, at a first interview, my inexperience must plead my excuse ; but if the sincerity my heart abounds with, can countervail for my indecorum ; and if yourself, madam, and the young lady shall ever approve my proposals ; that excess will, I hope, be easily forgiven.

Give me leave, madam, to add one word more, which is, that I behold so much merit in that lady, as with me, shall compensate for every defect of fortune ; so that whether she hath little, much, or none, my ardour will keep on its rate ; nor will I distrust her felicity with me, provided my person be not disagreeable to her.

You see before you, madam, an open, and a loving heart, not standing upon other
terms,

terms, than favour ; as whatsoever you may add, will prove more than we can really want, and what we may very well spare.

Her ladyship, who was endued with as keen a discernment as most women, had made such remarks on the young gentleman during this speech, and his air had made such an impression upon her, as had quite charmed her ; then being herself one, who had ever practised the sincere, rather than the flighty ; she ran not at random from the argument, as some mothers, in like case would have done, but desired to know his name and family.

He replied, that the first was M——s, and as to the last, his father was earl of P——ke, who allowed him, at present, twelve hundred a year ; but in four months time, he should enter upon five thousand ; that he was an only child, his father antient, and at his death, should have sixteen thousand.

Madam, added he, truth to your question, hath extracted this answer from me, which I could rather have concealed, till I had been intitled to a more valuable jewel, than I have yet mentioned. Her ladyship then asking what that was, he replied, that dear lady's smiles upon him, which would be

be of greater worth to him, than ten times his estate: now, madam, said he, as you have not hitherto found me upon the reserve, pray may I crave your name? To which her ladyship replied, that her husband was Sir Richard Gotham of Nottinghamshire, one of the present members for that county.

Your ladyship, said he, hath delighted me; in that my fate hath cast me unwittingly into so honourable a family. Dick Gotham, my particular friend at Oxford, is your ladyship's son; though as that, or descent from a crowned head, would add no force to my passion for this lady, so no inferior ancestry could abate it; but even joy itself, loses not, by being joined to felicitous circumstances.

Madam, added he, as I love to come to the point; in order to obviate any objection, of the possible non-compliance of my father, let me assure you, that he has left me master of my own choice, desiring only to see me happy, with whomsoever I may unite. And now, madam, said he, lest my company proves tedious, I have only to intreat, that I may be admitted to drink tea with you to-morrow? This being granted, Lord William, having saluted Miss Claudia, took his leave.

C H A P. XVIII.

Interview of the earl with her ladyship and miss. Are married. Character of married life. Sir Richard's death.

HER ladyship, before Sir Richard came home at night, had catechised Miss Claudia, in relation to Lord William; as whether she approved him, or chose to marry yet, for she was but just turned of seventeen; both which, as we may easily guess, were answered in the affirmative; girls of that age, being usually less backward, than they of twenty-seven; nor is it absolutely without reason: for these, all the world own women, and treat as such; but those can anticipate womanhood only by marriage, which of itself sets them on a par with their mother; and which of us all, willingly remains an underling?

Her ladyship, at Sir Richard's return, entered into a detail of what had happened in his absence, when he readily transferred the cause to her; but with this hint, that possibly, if his lordship really admired the girl, he might not stand on so much fortune as he gave his other children. Her lady-

ladyship, (to whom that doctrine sounded very harsh) told him, his lordship declared he did not ; but replied, that if the conduct of the treaty was submitted to her direction, she must have the nomination of the fortune too ; not doubting, but both himself, and her other children, would be perfectly satisfied with the equity of her proceedings ; and to this Sir Richard agreed.

She was now prepared for Lord William's visit, (in case he should not have altered his mind since the day before) and he came accordingly, drest exceeding fine. Her ladyship and he had near an hour's discourse before tea time ; in which she was so enamoured of his mien, elocution, and unreserved behaviour, together with the virtuous principles on which every of his views seemed founded ; that as she could gain-say none of his arguments, she not even once attempted it ; but only insisted, that the earl, his father, should forthwith be made acquainted with it.

Her ladyship, who acted upon the truest principles of honour, in all her proceedings, would not permit so generous a suitor (meerly for that he was so) to suffer as to her daughter's fortune ; but plainly informed him, that Sir Richard gave his daughters

ten

ten thousand pounds each, which as she desired not to diminish to his lordship, so neither would it, on any consideration, be augmented: and his lordship as frankly declared to her, that from the number of Sir Richard's children, he had no expectation that it would have been near so much.

At tea time, Miss Claudia, and her sister were introduced, and she was left alone with him when that was over, where having spent an hour in each other's company, Lord William took his leave, upon licence for his re-admission next day.

Sir Richard had, at the house, inquired as minutely into the earl's character, as an affair of that consequence required; and had gained ample satisfaction, as to the honour of an alliance with so worthy a peer, of which he had informed his lady; and, in the afternoon, his lordship introduced the earl to her ladyship; Sir Richard dining abroad.

Her ladyship, by the earl's behaviour, soon perceived that Lord William inherited his father's dispositions; for with all the freedom imaginable, he saluted her ladyship; and told her, that his son Will had conceived an affection for a daughter of her's; and madam, said he, as he is of age to know when himself is pleased; my
errand

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 259

errand to your ladyship is, only, as a matter of form, to signify that it hath my sanction.

Your lordship's generous nature, said her ladyship, cannot be matched, I believe, in the universe (save by his lordship your son) so freely to assent to a lady you have yet never seen, or whose qualifications may seem magnified in the young gentleman's eye, to what they may in that of a father. Your lordship will excuse me, lovers are the most improper persons to paint the genuine pourtrait of their mistresses; for as they can seldom spy a fault in the object of their wishes, so they are but too apt to aggravate natural perfections, to a pitch of divinity; whilst their more considerate parents only, form the true judgment.

Madam, replied the earl, my son is my whole family; we have been long messmates, and friends; I have ever made him my companion, my secrets are his, and his mine; so that in the unanimity of true friends, we have lost all restraint between us. I never attempt the least alteration in my affairs, but he is first consulted; or he in his, without my privy. We never disagree; for which reason, I am assured, my judgment will concur with his. Nay, in matrimony, though occasion might be ministered

nistered of difference in opinion, I think no parent ought further to interpose, than as to the general character of the party: but I have no cause to doubt of the young lady's accomplishments, and virtue, who has been guided into life under your ladyship's inspection; since it is not the first time, by many, for years past, that your ladyship hath been represented to me, in the most engaging lustre.

Now I am upon a visit to your ladyship, I must own, that I shall be desirous of beholding the lady, who hath had such an influence as to engage my son so powerfully; for amongst all his secrets, I have never once heard of his being in love before. I will then leave him with you; and if you both agree, he shall settle as he has desired he may, five thousand a year on the lady; and in my mind, the sooner they come together the better for them.

Miss Claudia was exquisitely handsome; and no sooner had her ladyship presented her to the earl, and he had saluted her; than, madam, said he, I wonder not that Will was in haste with me; for so inestimable a treasure, would even invigorate dry bones to action. Can your lordship discommend my choice? said Lord William. Son, replied the earl, I am satisfied; heaven

ven send you happy together. I shall be ready to ratify, whatever you agree to.

Both sides being so well pleased with the adventure, as Sir Richard's return to Adlehall drew nigh, her ladyship resolved to have the wedding consummated first, and preparations were carried on with such expedition, that in three week's time the nuptials were solemnized; and after a few days stay in town, they all set out for Nottinghamshire together.

What one is there, amongst the various blessings which providence hath so liberally dispensed to mankind, that is to be set in competition with a good wife! yet no man is so sensible of her value, as he to whom the benefit is denied. How many blanks is the wheel of fortune supplied with, against one real prize? and how is she frequently slighted, by the possessor, meerly, for that she is his own? What numberless events must all concur to render the marriage state truly felicitous! for whereas, there are two principles without which no happiness can be founded, how rarely do we find them equally in the same individuals! and wherever there happens an aberration, by how much this exceeds, by so much is the other defective.

I would

I would be understood by the first principle, to mean unlimited affection, disjoined from that of any other object; and by the latter, consummate compliance: for without these two, both concurring in each individual; a man might as well hope for comfort on a bed of thorns, as in the marriage state.

How very few are there, in whom either of those qualities rest at all! fewer still, in any degree worth nothing; but O! the scarcity of those, in whom they are remarkable, is excessive: then how many chances is it to one, that two of the same disposition, and endowments, should meet in that state, where the odds against it, is so extravagant!

Now, although these are incontestable truths; yet, how few are there, who before marriage, consider, and weigh each other's tempers! Some admiring the face, the shape, the conversation of the object, are so impregnated with inclination for converting it to their own property, as (through infatuation) willingly to decline all search into further particulars; and resting content, on the hopes that all will go well enough, plunge into that state, from whence there is no retraction; till after infinite intanglements and difficulties, having
struggled

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 263

struggled out a series of years ; the fall of one gives a joyous enlargement to the other.

Some again, for interest, and the amendment of their fortunes, snap at the first yoke-fellow that offers them with suitable conveniencies of life ; these having placed their comfort in that only, are soon sensible how they have erred in their choice, by the imbitterments, every other relative to her, affords them ; nor can it be said, either of riches, beauty, parts, or any other visible external attraction, that it more than pleases for a while in the enjoyment, till becoming habitual, and perhaps marred, by infinite other ill qualities, it grows first tiresome, then odious.

The occasions of discontent are various, as the objects in natural compositions are numerous ; a very trifle, a meer nothing, will be sufficient for some tempers, to set all in a flame ; especially, whatever amounts, or may by construction be heightened, into a slight, or reflection on the other party ; for it is observable in the marriage state, that though neither party affects the other ; yet each is as impatient, at the least omission of regard from the other, as if in reality, the party injured, was the most indulgent of creatures.

How

How glorious a state then must it prove, where mutual love and compliance meet? Which will not only stifle inadvertencies in the birth, by over-looking them, but cease to urge any contradictory propositions to the breach of unity; nor are we indeed to expect either clamour or disappointment, from persons thus equally tempered, both conscious of offence when given, as easy of remission.

We may justly insist, that if any two were ever coupled under these circumstances, Sir Richard and his lady were the happy pair; for neither of them assuming, each in turn condescended, according to the reason of things, and as occasion required; and equally prizing each other's judgment for action, neither required, what the other's sense of the same thing opposed; the will, ever concurring with each other.

Her ladyship's prudence, and the experience Sir Richard had long had of it, had justly placed her at the head of all his domestick affairs; and the exact account she kept, and rendered, of every minute transaction, continued her uncontrollably therein; for in himself, his nature inclined him rather to an indolence that way.

Though his estate, with the interest of his personals, was more than twelve thousand

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 265

and pounds a year, she seldom expended above three or four of it ; for either more servants, or horses, than could find employment, were her utter aversion ; too much idleness, (as she used to express herself,) rendering both vicious. So that in a course of thirty years which they lived together, her savings had made a prodigious augmentation to his estate, and had enabled him, without breaking in upon his original patrimony, to portion out his children as I have mentioned : notwithstanding which, they lived all the while in an open, and generous frugality ; neither parsimoniously, when occasion offered worthy of expence ; or lavishly, when no cause was apparent.

In the thirty-first year of their marriage, a pleurisy carried off Sir Richard ; for whose loss, one would have expected her ladyship should have been inconsolable : but she was far otherwise, esteeming death as a necessary event of life, sooner or later ; and received it only, as a more sensible memento of her own instability, to spur her up to more diligence, and attention to her own call, as the next in succession, and course of nature. Instead therefore, of those either forced, or real lamentations, seldom omitted for the death of so near a relative ; she made it her business to collect her thoughts deli-

berately, and pursue such measures only, as prudence should dictate upon the calamity.

She wrote letters with her own hand to each of her absent children, injoining them to repair forthwith to her; then opening his will, he had made his unmarried children equal with those married, had given his eldest son his late uncle's estate, and all the rest to his wife; but Addlehall estate, after her death, to his eldest son.

The will proved agreeable to them all, being as perfectly satisfied, as to what was to come to them from the disposition her ladyship would make at her death, as if it had been already appointed. Then all continuing a full month with her, they dispersed to their several abodes, except some of the younger unmarried, and the eldest, now Sir Richard, who staid most of the summer; when he also returned to his chambers in the Temple: for he was bred to the bar, his next brother a merchant, the third a physician, and the youngest was apprentice to a banker: but her ladyship made one general invitation to them to Addlehall, whenever their affairs would permit them.

C H A P. XIX.

Lady Gotham pestered with suitors. A barrister's attack. A parson's. She is almost entrapt, but escapes.

IT can scarce be presumed, that a widow of her ladyship's accomplishments, with so large a real estate for her life, and such vast personals at her own disposal, should long enjoy Addlehall without interruptions from impertinent suitors; nor in fact did she: but resolving to lead the remainder of her life in widowhood, she turned a civil, but deaf ear to all; nor was she long in dispatching those of any real merit and significance, by an ingenious declaration of her deliberate resolution, never more to engage in wedlock's bands; she having sufficient cares upon her hands, in her children, from whose welfares, she could admit of no avocation. I cannot say, that she could with equal facility dispatch them all; for now and then, one was so smitten with the lustre of her gold, that he attacked *vi & armis*, nor was his mettle so degenerate as to turn, or fly at a repulse, from any motives: not but that her lady-

N 2

ship's

ship's person was as lovely as any woman's in the kingdom of her age.

What improprieties are consistent with some mens wishes ! who because their stomachs stand to a peculiar taste, think much to be deprived of a dip in whatever dish (of the like relish) they came at ; but how much more unaccountable are they, who will not rest content, without the whole course ?

After a general dismissal to numbers, her ladyship, in the third year of her widowhood, was assailed by a barrister at law ; who at the university, and in the inns of court, had made himself master of just so much science, as had intitled him the terror of his ignorant neighbours, and the standing jest of men of understanding. He estimated his skill, by the seniority he demanded in the house he was a member of ; and had perverted every slight hint he had collected by his few attendance at the bar, into a maxim ; the want of a just application whereof, and of a capacity for deducing consequences therefrom, had led him into such numberless errors, as had cost him little less than his whole patrimony to repair. This worthy squire, willing to recover all past slips by one bold stroke, most gallantly made a push at our incomparable widow.

He

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 269

He was none of your sneaking, puling lovers, whose disappointment tending to their dissolution, too frequently ensnare the virgin heart into pity ; but his artillery carried compassion to her ladyship, on whom, the burden of transacting such large concerns had fallen, as much rather befitted a manly genius, and strength to grapple with ; and in compassion for so much excellence over-weighed, would fain (from the single motive of his esquire errantry) have submitted his shoulder to the load, for her ease and conveniency.

It was to very little purpose, she urged the safe method she had put her affairs into, and the little difficulty she found in the management of them ; nay, the pleasure, and amusement they were of to her : that being, as he said, all for the worse ; for he insisted, that such fancies proceeding from a distorted temperament of mind, and deceitful view of things, were wholly chimerical ; and that she must soon be undone, unless the conducting of her affairs was placed in safer hands than those of a woman.

He cited abundance of cases by name, with the very term they were adjudged in, and by what great men of the law : he also put many more, familiarly, as between

John at Okes, and Tom at Stiles, with his own comments and sentence upon each; wherein the spinster, and relict, had been severally reduced, by an over confidence in their own discernments. He proceeded next, to several others, who had been in a fair way to the same destruction, had not his aid interposed, between them and nothing. He magnified the feats he had performed, from his universal experience in things, where his advice had not been obstinately rejected, and the ill consequences which had ensued, where it had. He aggravated the bulk of his fees, received from the widow and orphan, for his salutary councils; nay, insisted he had often turned the scale of a drooping fortune, out of meer friendship to the parties, where all had been implicitly submitted to his management; then, how much more must he bestir himself, and exert every faculty, in a cause so interesting, as the security of her ladyship; whom he admitted to have gained such an ascendant over him, that his very soul issued at every pore, while he but held conversation with her.

He then seizing her by the hand, in extatick eloquence, besought her well to consider; herself, her fortune, her family, as all dependant upon the answer she should return

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 271

return him; willing her cautiously to meditate, before she replied, lest she should subject herself to the distress of a melancholy after-thought, when it might be too late, in case she should rashly proceed to a denial.

Her ladyship, who had been but little moved at this florid harangue; returned him abundance of compliments, for the concern he had shewn for her person and estate; but as neither of them, she said, at present, were by any means, in the desperate situation that his clients had been recovered from; she begged leave to postpone his service, till she should be sensible of some alteration in them; when no doubt, but so worthy a gentleman, would be the person she should apply to for advice: for that having proved himself of such considerable abilities, he need not fear, but her first stage would be to him.

Poor lady! said the man of law; but that the case daily presents to us, and to the gentlemen of the faculty of physick, I should imagine you some prodigy: but women! madam, women! tender souls! judge all the world as harmless as themselves. You err greatly, madam, if you indulge these notions. We men of experience in the world, are not to be misled by the delusive

persuasions of your sex ; we are sensible of your danger ; and good-will to the deserving, induces us, not only to warn you of your fall, but to divert you from the precipice.

Her ladyship waited only for his departure, to take her final leave of him ; but he was not to be easily avoided ; for he stuck as close as a bur to her, nor was to be dislodged, till night rendered his absence necessary. He made several subsequent attempts, for future conversation with her, till he had been so often repulsed, as to decline all further attendance.

There was a clergyman, about six miles from her ladyship's ; who being of a younger branch to a noble house, had been well educated, and lately inducted to an excellent living, of about eight hundred pounds a year ; and might, probably, lie in further way of preferment, from the interest of his friends in power.

This young divine had scarce received his first Easter offerings, before the fame of lady Gotham had tingled in both his ears ; which by the briskness of their sensation, transmitting the cause to his heart, with a sort of matrimonial twitchings, all manner of rest was forbidden to his eye-lids, till their wards had feasted on that elegant morsel.

morfel. He had made the most accurate disquisition into her ladyship's sentiments of mankind, her genius, her disposition, her age, her morals; but above all, into her temporal estate: nor could he upon the strictest scrutiny, but conceive, (and that for divers weighty considerations) that she was a soul worthy of being saved, by a member of the church militant.

He was a man of quick natural parts, little of a scholastick pedant; nor otherwise turned for a pillar of his profession, save that no man's talents were better adapted, to the collection of St. Peter's patrimony. He was not one of those who drive headlong, nor examine the ways, till they are mired in the quicksand; but deliberately judged, e'er he concluded.

The first position that he laid down to himself (and which if rightly managed generally carries half the contest) was, that she was a woman; from whence, he deduced this corollary, that she was to be won. The means next presenting, he applied to the woman within her. Thinks he, this snug little hat of mine will never smite her, as a grave and sedate lady; these little quill ruffles, which look so gimy of a Sunday, nor my sparkling diamond ring, that attracter of the eyes of my congregation

from wandering besides my pulpit; nor my silk gown and cassock, for whose sake they are more transported with my person, than elocution; no, argued he, none, none of these will do. She is reported to be a pious matron, then the broader the brim (with us and the quakers) the more sanctity it shades. She is serious, and grave; then the homelier the covering, and plainer the deportment, still the more favours it of the primitive fathers. He therefore suited himself at all points, proper, (as your heralds say) and drawing down his face into a mortified length, (for his own globular visage would never have answered) that he might the nearer approach to her age and solidity, he mounted an old chariot he had borrowed, (his own being too gay) and joining two of his worst cart-horses to it, gravely drove to the widow's.

A sober and upright clergyman, was of all others, the most agreeable companion for her ladyship; so that he found his admission to her most readily. He made a reverend, but aukward bow, and being seated, began with the rumour that had resounded her ladyship's virtues through all that country; adding, how acceptable a thing it was to his ears, that there should be yet remaning in the world, a character,

with which a man of his cloth, need not take shame to converse with. He described his situation, and the income of his living, with this melancholy remark; that as human nature required a proportionate relaxation, from the duties of its function, he had not in his circuit round his benefice, been any where yet introduced to that society, where a sober man might pass an hour, free from the intrusion of the abominable vices of the age, in uncorrupted simplicity.

Amongst the gentlemen, madam, said he, drinking, swearing, gaming, and obscenity, claims three fourths of the time they can spare together; and sorry he was, he said, he could not speak more favourably of the softer sex; but that hitherto, from all his nicest observations upon them, he had found, that a general levity, and nothingness had possessed them; and a trifling vanity, had enervated even their own weakness; insomuch, that he became a most unacceptable companion for them.

Never to have heard of her ladyship, he said had been synonymous to having dwelt amongst the antipodes; wherefore, he resolved to introduce himself to her family, by the earliest means; where if after so many encomiums, he should still meet with disappointment, he was determined, never

more to covet fellowship with the human species; but secluding himself from his fellow creatures, to pass the remainder of his days in eremitical solitude, save such parts of them, as the indispensable duties of his function, required him to bestow in publick.

Her ladyship was never so hit in her life, as by this same Parson Double, (for that was his name, he had told her) nor ever felt she a more secret pleasure, redounding from the discourse of any man before; for he had acted his part to a miracle. She not in the least suspecting he had formed any design upon her, received him in the most open, friendly, and unreserved manner; they reasoned for several hours upon the most serious subjects, all which Mr. Double explained, not only to her ladyship's satisfaction, but edification too; he declaring, that an age extended in their present conversation, as it would be the most delightful thing on earth to him, so were he obliged to pass his days on the topicks generally used, by way of entertainment in that country, since he had been settled in it; he should pray for his dissolution, as the most eligible thing that could befall him; then intreating her ladyship to pardon the inclination he had, for repeating a
visit

visit which had been so grateful to his way of thinking ; he, with the profoundest respect, took leave.

If the doctor had enjoyed himself with the lady to perfection, she had been no less engaged by his deportment and conversation, even to longing for a repetition of his visit ; nor was he for some months, once denied access to her, or had he ever as yet hinted at the least offer of love : lofty and seraphick dialogues, with knotty points of divinity, and morality, being the flights on which all their arguments soared, till he had imperceptibly ingratiated himself to her in such wise, that had he struck while it was hot, I cannot be responsible for her ladyship, how far she might have been prevailed upon, to have said yea ; but the parson was resolved she should gorge the bait thoroughly, before he hooked her ; when he doubted not, but a little play, would have delivered her into his arms.

We cannot always answer for the event of the most promising inceptions ; for nothing could glide more smoothly than the doctor's amour, till an unlucky accident intervening, tript up his heels, and enlarged the views of the almost captivated lady.

There were some strange ladies, one day, upon a visit, where her ladyship chanced,
at

at the same time, to make one; and as the ladies tattle seldom confines itself to objects only of the nearest situation to themselves, but takes in the characters of more extended circles, and of corners, themselves have never visited; (for hearsay with them, is as solid a ground for argument, as the best founded judgment upon known facts) Mr. Double being sprung in the conversation, he must necessarily have his run amongst them, till (having dissected his life, and conversation, as they had done many others, whom they had already dropt), his turn should give place to some new game.

In short, they had so canvassed over his life, his actions, and his morals, and set him before her ladyship in so different a light, to what she had ever before viewed him in, that she became exceeding uneasy at it. One insisted, that he was the meekest prig in a cassock, that ever was beheld before. Another, that he smelt more like a civet-cat than a clergyman. A third, that he preached like a master of the ceremonies, more than a divine, and was much fitter for a beau than a parson; nor was any parcel of the apparatus of his house, or person, decorated with that becoming gravity, as befitted his occupation: but that having a very good living, one of them said, she
heard

heard he was of late set up for a fortune-hunter.

This last article nettled her ladyship to such a degree (for she should have taken it for a sting at herself, had any of the strangers known her) that being past all further patience, she went off; resolving to satisfy herself, from her own senses, the next Sunday: she took coach therefore on that day for Mr. Double's parish, planting herself at an inn, which she was informed, lay between the parsonage house and the church, for the benefit of seeing him pass by, unobserved by him.

The bells had no sooner given her notice that he must soon approach, than she stepped to the window for a full view; nor had she long been stationed there, before she was too well assured, that all she had heard was no forgery. His whole habit, from his hat to his shoe, were of a piece; that, had its narrow brim elevated, rather to the cock of a foot-soldier, than the expanse of an orthodox divine; his ruffles, though exceeding narrow, added not a little, to the swing of his white hand, at the end of the cassock sleeve, which was turned up with black damask. Descending then to his feet, she was astonished, at a pair of glittering Bristol stone buckles, upon a nice Spanish ground;
a fine

a fine white cambrick handkerchief, disdaining confinement in so close a recess as the pocket, hung dangling from his side to his ancles; then a fine white kid glove on one hand, with its fellow swinging by a tip of its finger, compleated the whole man.

Her ladyship had no slight labour to persuade herself, that this spruce fop should be the very individual plain country parson, that had so often appeared to her, under a shew of more than twenty years his senior, with the most profound, and venerable aspect; nor was it conceivable by her, how he had induced this alteration upon himself; for in her opinion, no two men could have been more unlike each other, than this very parson, to himself at Addlehall.

She followed him, however, to church, at some distance, and not being well known there, (for she was entirely mobbed up) took her stand in an obscure corner, from whence she might observe his behaviour, without being noticed herself; but she was soon satisfied, that the most she had heard of Mr. Double, was the least part of the disagreeableness of his character.

He was no sooner in his desk, (for he read the prayers that morning) than extracting his handkerchief, he wiped the powder from his face, laying that in a place

by itself; then casting an eye round the circuit of the church, he produced his snuff-box, and took a pinch, with his little finger bent; the diamond ring thereon, being then exposed to the full view of the congregation, dazzled their eyes, while he shook it against his nose, with great agility; then wiping the loose dust from his lip, he disposed of the implements in proper arrangement, for further use; set his wig in order, and stroaking his band down smooth, he opened the book, and began with the service, in a feigned theatrical tone; but before the first halt, (during which time he had taken three pinches, and as often dusted off the scattered atoms from his band and breast) her ladyship's choler rising, against so unworthy a son of our common mother, she quitted the auditory, and returning to her inn, posted home, under a settled determination of never seeing him more.

Mr. Double, not suspecting what had happened, was about the middle of the week, at her ladyship's gate again; but the rebuff he met with, leaving him little encouragement for a second call, the courtship concluded with that visit.

C H A P. XX.

Account of the foundling. Courtship of Miss Emma.

THE ill luck which had attended most of her ladyship's passionate admirers, in their several negotiations with her, having gained her the character of a resolute widow, had deterred all others from attempts of the like nature; so that she had been long freed from fresh suits. She had lived in a most polite and decent manner, with all her neighbours; and the sole pride she took in life, consisted in a capacity for good offices: her children were all disposed of, and settled in life, save Miss Emma, her youngest daughter. Her foster child, the foundling, young Mr. Ashby had been well educated by her, and was now upon a visit to her from the university, where she had placed him, with intent to receive holy orders, having a living of about four hundred a year in her presentation, and for which she designed him, when of age to receive institution.

Her house was ever open to her children as their own, whenever they pleased to amuse themselves there; and she had distributed

distributed most of her ready money amongst them, save about thirty thousand pounds, of which she had formed an augmenting fund, from the savings of her income, over and above her annual expences.

Young Mr. Ashby was grown a very compleat gentleman, and her ladyship having piqued herself upon proving his patroness, had concluded at her death, to leave him ten thousand pounds; which, with his living, she thought would prove an ample provision for him; for she was almost as fond of him, as of her own children; nor was he less obsequious, and dutiful to her ladyship, than to an own mother; and yet with the same familiarity and freedom.

It was at this visit (though she had from a child been a favourite of his) that Ashby became enamoured of Miss Emma, nor was his passion to be abated, by any reasons that he was able to produce against it. He was fully sensible how much he depended upon her ladyship, nor was he less so, that his inclination being divulged to her, might possibly lay the foundation of an irreparable breach between them, and fore-run his reduction, to his primitive nothing, for his rashness, in aspiring to the possession of her daughter; but yet, neither his own reflections, or the terror of any approaching

proaching evil, could divert him from his projected happiness with Miss Emma.

He loved her to excess, yet never could he apply himself to declare it to her, but the privation of every other blessing in life, presented such a scene of horror to his mind, that he could not have the least power for proceeding. He drooped about like a mope, laboured under the pain which he durst not utter, nor had he the hope of ever standing fairer in his own prospects, than at present; exclusive of that little tyrant love.

His eyes, however, had not been so silent as his tongue, nor was the young lady so insensible of their elocution, as not to have mistrusted the cause of their languor; and indeed, so far was she from condemning the situation of his flame, that she received daily more and more delight, from the conquest she perceived herself to have made over him; till frequent reflections on that subject, had so riveted him in her heart, that his backwardness in declaring his mind to her, became her sole distress: in short, she languished no less for Mr. Ashby, than he did for her, nor was she a whit less able to conceal it.

There are, in the intercourse of lovers, such innumerable methods of exploring each other's very souls, (besides bare words, either

ther written or pronounced,) which to the dumb, or deaf, are both expressive, and significant, that I need not burthen my reader with particulars; for the eye, above every member, can transmit keener arrows, than even those, twanged from the lips, though on the wings of bitterest sighing; to this organ therefore, they had recourse alternately, and from this imbibed reciprocally, the softness of their several passions; nor were they longer upon the reserve, after some continued practice this way, than if the ice of their inclinations had been broken through, by the liveliest declarations on the one side, and the readiest submission on the other: so that, as Mr. Ashby omitted no opportunity of delighting Miss Emma, she scrupled no testimony of revealing it; till perpetual repetitions of the same uniform course of behaviour, had formed an indissoluble union between them. Nor was his tongue longer to be restrained, from pouring forth the issues of his heart, to the beloved object.

He began, under such confusion, and in so diffident a manner, as plainly indicated both joy and amazement, lest his presumption in soaring so much beyond his merit, (as he told her) should induce a fall so precipitate, as must for ever destroy all his hopes

hopes for her ladyship's favour ; inſomuch, that Miſs Emma, who could by no means imagine his jealousy to be unjuſtly founded, (after ſome few diſcourſes on that head, and the further acknowledgments of their mutual affection,) undertook of herſelf, to releaſe him from the dread he had conceived, at making the firſt propoſition for her ladyſhip's conſent ; by aſſuring him, that if he would but for ſome few days behave with indifference to her, ſhe would not doubt of perfecting their deſires.

However diſagreeable this might be to Mr. Aſhby ; yet ariſing from her own motion, and the promiſed reward being of ſuch value to him, he ſubmitted ; when elevated at the benignity of her condeſcenſion, he preſt her in his arms, for the firſt time that he had ever dared to intrude ſo far, and acknowledged his joy beyond conception.

This ſcheme, thus concerted ; miſs grew dejected, loſt her appetite, reliſhed no company, ſpoke but little, walked by herſelf, vented nothing but ſighs ; and in one week, became ſo wan, that her ladyſhip took notice of it ; and queſtioning her about it, her answer (with a ſigh) was, that ſhe was very well, ſhe ailed nothing.

She

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 287

She then took care that her eyes should stand with water, and look red, as just wiped from crying; and when her ladyship had observed it, she would with tears just gushing, turn from her, as desirous of concealing it: which management (as she expected) but the more inflamed her ladyship's curiosity for the cause; till after some days behaviour in this manner, at her ladyship's command, and under promise of pardon, and privacy, she delivered herself of the secret; that she perceived her affections to be so fixed upon Mr. Ashby, that she could never more expect to be happy.

Her ladyship was neither so much troubled, or surprized at this news, as Miss Emma expected she would have been; but upon questioning her of the continuance of her passion, its solidity, whether it was of sufficient duration to demand regard, or whether absence for a short space might not divert it from its channel, to some other, perhaps, more agreeable to her hereafter? The young lady, with tears replied, that she believed it to be impossible; but that whatever her mamma should enjoin her, she would comply with, to the best of her ability; even to the absenting herself from Mr. Ashby for ever, if it was her pleasure; only, (and here she wept past pacifying)
begged

begged of her, never to urge any arguments for engaging her to any other man; for that truly, Mr. Ashby had somewhat in his person, his address, his temper; nay, infused through his very nature, so forcibly biasing her sentiments in his favour; that though, if it should be contradictory to her ladyship's pleasure, that she should seek her felicity with him, she would punctually obey her; yet, she might not be constrained to risque all future comforts with any other, to whom she was sure, it would be impossible to confine her affection.

The humane mother was soon as much afflicted for her daughter's tears, as miss herself seemed to be; asking, if she had any reason to believe Mr. Ashby would approve such an offer, from any prior motives of his own? And whether he had either by speech, or behaviour, used expressions that should incline her to such belief? To which miss, who had ever from her cradle been used to the truth, (that being a principle most strictly infused into all with whom her ladyship had any concern, and what for its own intrinsic worth, never met with the least discouragement) replied, that indeed, he had; but not till from their long familiarity, and peculiar deportment to each other, he had gained as thorough an insight into her breast,

breast, as she had into his own ; and even then, in the most respectful, and fearful manner, lest his profession should prove an offence, unpardonable by her ladyship ; but upon the whole, she was perfectly satisfied, that he delighted in her.

Her ladyship kissed her, bid her dry her tears, hope the best, and assured her, that she should know more of her mind the next day.

It was now dinner time, and her ladyship having received this hint, could plainly read characters of confusion in both their faces, and such glances would steal out, as their endeavours to conceal, rendered but the more conspicuous ; then entering into indifferent subjects after dinner with Mr. Ashby ; so soon as Miss Emma had left the room, she point blank put the question to him, whether he had ever had thoughts of marriage yet ?

Poor Ashby was driven to such distress for an answer, that he was ready to have fallen from his chair. It was no slight query as to the subject, but when his explanation should reveal the object, he shuddered with reflections on the consequences. However, the demand was his patron's, the cause his mistress's, and the truth required by his profession : then, rising from his

seat, and bending on one knee before her ladyship, Madam, said he, your present demand has placed my life, or death, wholly within the compass of your sentence.

Your ladyship is more my parent, than the unnatural mother who having born me, deserted me to perish, had not providence directed your ladyship to my succour; wherefore, I may say, you gave me life: life! did I say, your ladyship hath given me more, nurture, education, and every valuable enjoyment in my infant state; nor has your bounty staid it's progress, on my arrival at manhood; but still pursues me with open hand, for my future advancement.

Judge then, how unhappy am I! who loaded with your beneficence, have lost all sense of other gratification, than in the very thing that may charge me with presumption; and that worst of crimes, ingratitude to so noble a benefactress: for with what face, and void of what confusion can I declare to your ladyship, that your very kindness to me, and that alone, hath inspired me with a desire so far beyond my station and merit, as that of being (O heaven! receive it with patience) your son-in-law.

O! why has not providence subjected our passions to our reason! then had this
1
aban-

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 291

abandoned every hope of obtaining that, and crushed it in the opening bud, e'er ever it had gained predominancy over my very soul, and rendered its power uncontrollable!

Let me not, dear madam, for climbing up thus high, meet a more precipitate fall from your favour, than I can bear; and if I must sink, let me gently down; lost to myself, the world, your ladyship, Miss Emma; but still, receive me under your distant patronage, though I may be expelled your house, your family, for my presumption.

My anguish for my lost hope, will be my sufficient punishment, without the farther weight of your hand to depress me. I tremble for my doom, my conscious heart writes it in blackest characters, and every sense turns ear to receive it; chilling to ice at the expected dismal sound: but, that I may justify your ladyship in pronouncing it, I from my conscience do declare, that in my own opinion, I am for ever unworthy of your future regard; and any sentence within that, will testify the mildness of your ladyship's judgment.

A deluge of tears forbidding a further flow of words, he knelt silently before his

judge, ready to receive his final condemnation.

Her ladyship, who never rejoiced in ministering pain, where it was in her power to mitigate it ; especially to one, whom she had ever so much esteemed, as to place in the secondary rank of a child : compassionating the young couple's misery, under the uncertainty of her displeasure, extended her hand to Mr. Ashby, and raised him from his knees. My dear, said she, why all this horror, your mind seems affected with, on addressing yourself to me ? I have ever been as easy of access to you, as to my own sons ; and shall I, think you, behave with less fondness to you, for your more particularly avowed esteem for my family, than I ever did before ? Nay, should I tell you, you have presumed further than became you, should I act other than to an own child, in like case ? Think not then, that I shall therefore discard you ; I judge not by starts of passion, or prejudice ; I weigh your merit in other cases, against your transgression in this ; which of itself may render you easy at all events, as to my protection : but if I should proceed a step further, and protest to you, that nothing could have sounded more grateful to me, than the profession you have now made me ; your heart
I would

would surely rest in security, and be happy, in the prosecution of your suit to my daughter, in the most amiable manner to you both.

You have misconstrued me much, if you shall have imagined, that I paid greater regard to riches, or extraction, than to merit. You have deserved both what I have, and shall do for you. My daughter loves you, which I presume you know; may you be therefore both happy: nor shall she have it in her power to urge hereafter, that she married a poor man. I have made a reserve of ten thousand pounds for you; which, with the living I promised you, will set you upon a par with her, and myself will join your hands, so soon as is convenient.

Poor Ashby, who had waited only for a blast upon all his prospects, could scarce credit what he heard for a reality, or well bear up under such an inundation of delight, as then flowed in upon him; but suspected himself to be in a trance, and that some delusive vision had placed an airy phantom in his view (instead of her ladyship) who had uttered these pleasing tidings; nor was he able to reply, his ideas crowded his imagination in such shoals, that they choked his utterance; till hav-

ing fixed his eyes on her ladyship for a considerable time.

What have I done, to be so blest? said he. Whence can this excess of mercy flow to me, but from the hand of that being, to whom I have dedicated myself, and my best, though unworthy services? For madam, added he, give me leave to distrust human nature's capacity, (unassisted) for such munificence.

Surely you, madam, had exceeded the limits of our nature's perfections, in your former liberalities to me; but are you not content, till you have prevented my every wish for more, by the donation of your love, and the enjoyment of that part of you, which I am assured is as dear to you as your own soul?

I am not able sufficiently to thank you, madam, nor, could I liquify my whole substance into profusions of prayers, and blessings on you, would that bear the least proportion to the benefit you have conferred upon me.

If future love, regard, obedience, gratitude,

My prayers to heaven for your prosperity,
Can aught avail towards a recompence,
May heav'n repay the least neglect, ten fold.

Her

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 295

Her ladyship then leaving Ashby to his raptures, retired ; whilst he made the best of his speed to his beloved Emma.

C H A P. XXI.

Dolly erects an hospital. Endows it. Dies guardian of it.

ABOUT two years after her ladyship had married Ashby to her daughter, the living became vacant, to which she presented him ; and Sir Richard marrying a rich heiress, she gave up Addlehall to him, and retired to her son Ashby's ; where the older she grew, she the more devoted both herself, and substance, to acts of piety and charity.

She had for some years had a project in her head, for erecting an hospital, and had concerted divers schemes, for rendering it as useful as possible ; till at length she fixed upon a proper revenue, for thirty poor married couples, past their labour, men and women, who could bring certificates of their good behaviour in that state, for twenty years next preceding the time of their application. They were to be only handicrafts men and labourers, and such as had never received

alms from their respective parishes, and at the time of their admission, were solemnly to verify an inventory, of all they were worth in the world, not to exceed ten pounds; and as fast as any man or woman died, the survivor was in a month, either to take such single mate, as might then be so in the hospital, or to be at liberty of marrying at large, to some person of good repute, who should then be intitled to a place in the hospital, in order to compleat the number, or else to resign.

She appointed a constant daily provision, for dinner and supper; one publick fire, with coal, candle, linnen, and other furniture for each chamber; and to each man, and each woman by the week, for extraordinaries, the sum of two shillings in money, besides all sorts of wearing apparel, in a uniform livery.

She appointed a guardian, with an annual salary of an hundred pounds; a preacher at sixty; a curate at thirty; an apothecary and surgeon at thirty; and a steward at fifty, to be all married men, and constantly resident upon the hospital, and fixed a stated allowance for their table; nor was any one of their wives to be displaced upon death of the husband, but to marry his successor. They had also all proper allowances at home,

home, of furniture, and conveniencies for their wives, and servants to attend them ; and having settled this, she pitched upon a spot of ground for the purpose, and herself planned out the building, not so much for ostentation as use.

I might have given my reader the plan itself, and sections of the buildings ; but shall omit them, and content myself with proceeding to shew, how her ladyship provided for the expence of the foundation, which was in this manner. Having compleated the purchase, she applied the income of twenty thousand pounds, and the savings of her other estates, for carrying on the buildings, which she compleated in two years and an half : and having furnished them, she quitted her son Ashby, to reside herself, as guardian of the hospital ; that by an intimacy with the procedure of it, she might the better judge of any deficiency, or superabundance, and rectify it from experience ; and that she might the more minutely frame a set of rules, for the more regular guidance and governance of it for the future.

She was now settled in the guardian's lodge, and had soon appointed all proper officers, and fixed them upon the spot, whom she once a week consulted, upon the exigencies of the place. Next, she appointed

pointed all under-officers, as cook, butler, pantry-man, brewer, baker, &c. And lastly, she appointed a day for the alms people to attend, and give in their credentials; when taking proper time for examinations and enquiries, a subsequent day was limited for admissions; and in less than six months from her first settling there, she having filled up her compliment, saw herself at the head of her numerous family, all dependants on her bounty; and as she would often say (when it was alledged what a pleasure it must be to a well-disposed mind, to behold daily, so many souls made happy by her munificence) selected for messengers, to carry her soul to heaven; nor wanted any part of the establishment the least alterations, after the first year.

Never lived any woman more joyously, and to satisfaction, than her ladyship did, during her guardianship over this endowment; contenting herself all the while, with the bare revenue of the post, so that in a few years the income of her estates had amounted to a vast sum. She had the sole nomination, for her life, of all the posts, pensioners, and servants, which no guardian ever had after; and the supervising of all certificates of qualification; having reduced the foundation, before her death,
to

to one of the best regulated charities in the universe. She adjusted the subsistence of each member, so as to answer all sorts of exigencies, that neither want, or superfluity abounded there. She kept strictly to her marriages, which sometimes, amongst the very antient, were performed immediately after the decease of the former mate; and though that method was at first obnoxious to censure, yet a little familiarity, and custom reconciled it, and made evident, that her ladyship's discernment was exquisite; for who so careful of the survivor, as a wife or husband; and by that means, there was seldom occasion for the foreign aid of nurses, which her ladyship had been peculiarly studious of avoiding.

Towards the decline of her life, she nominated a married successor, who was to enter upon his office, upon her decease; and having erected a vault in her chapel, she conveyed the remains of her late husband thither, by whom she proposed to be deposited; and left orders, that the vault should then be inclosed, and never more opened. And that no one in future might pretend ignorance of her commands, she not only inrolled it amongst her statutes, but caused an inscription for that purpose to be fixed over the place.

She

She had frequent debates with herself, who she should constitute governors of her charity ; but all terminated in her own children, sons and daughters, and the several heirs of their respective bodies, male or female, for ever ; directing, that the eldest son should nominate to the first vacancy, and the rest in succession, by perpetual rotation.

She nominated them all visitors of the charity ; and, in cases of great difficulty, or in the choice of superior officers, it should be determined by any six under their hands ; and that if any overplus should remain of the yearly stipends, it should go towards repairs ; and if it should still be considerable, it should be from time to time lent out, upon good security, where it was evident to the guardian and officers, that there was a probability, by that means, of saving poor families who were industrious ; but whose talents were confined, for want of stock to prosecute their occupations ; and these loans were to subsist for three years, without any interest : but if notwithstanding a surplus should remain, it was to be applied towards building, and for the support of more poor pairs, in manner as the former.

Thus

Squire Gotham and Doll Clod. 301

Thus having finished her whole scheme, and resided as guardian upon her hospital for about fifteen years, this noble spirited woman, about the age of seventy-five, departed, with the prayers and good wishes of all her surviving acquaintance.

F I N I S.



BOOKS printed for M. COOPER, at the
Globe in Pater-noster Row.

MEMOIRS

OF THE
LIFE and ACTIONS

OF

Charles Osborn, Esq;

Natural Son to the E— of A—e.

CONTAINING

An Account of his polite Education ; his
Loss of a vast Estate left him by his Fa-
ther ; his Distress, till relieved by an un-
known Lady, by whom he had seven
Children before he ever saw her ; his
Extravagancies ; his eight several Mar-
riages ; his Intrigues ; his turning Priest ;
with the vast Fluctuation of his Fortune,
till resolving to live soberly, he not only
married the unknown Lady, but became
possessed of the great Estate he had lost ;
and made Restitution.

Written by himself in the decline of life.



A
NARRATIVE
OF THE
Life and astonishing ADVENTURES
OF

JOHN DANIEL,
A Smith at Royston in Hertfordshire,
For a Course of seventy Years.

CONTAINING,
The melancholy Occasion of his Travels.
His Shipwreck with one Companion on a desolate Island. Their way of Life. His accidental Discovery of a Woman for his Companion. Their peopling the Island.

ALSO,
A Description of a most surprising Engine, invented by his Son Jacob, on which he flew to the Moon, with some Account of its Inhabitants. His return, and accidental Fall into the Habitation of a Sea-Monster, with whom he lived two Years. His further Excursions in Search of England. His Residence in Lapland, and Travels to Norway, from whence he arrived at Aldborough, and further Transactions till his death, in 1711, Aged 97.

Illustrated with several Copper Plates.

Engraved by Mr. BOITARD.

Taken from his own Mouth,

By Mr. RALPH MORRIS.

ELEANORA;

OR A

Tragical but true CASE

O F

INCEST

I N

GREAT BRITAIN.

THE

EUNUCH:

OR, THE

NORTHUMBERLAND Shepherd.

In FOUR CHAPTERS.

Whereon hangs a TALE.

Apply it who may.

